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GENERAL PHILOSOPHY, DEFINITION, CHARACTERISTICS, ANDBENEFITS OF PHILOSOPHY, ETC.

Muhammad Aqil Sirait Syahmi Faruqi

muhammadaqilsirait@gmail.com faruqisyahmi@gmail.com

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General Philosophy, Ontology, Epistemology, Axiology, Philosophical Thinking, Critical Reasoning, Literature Review.

ABSTRACT

General philosophy holds a central position in guiding the development of science, morality, and human civilization. This study aims to examine in depth the meaning, characteristics, and benefits of general philosophy using the literature review method. The research was conducted by reviewing classical and contemporary works of major thinkers such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Al-Kindi, Ibn Sina, Al-Ghazali, Descartes, Kant, and modern Indonesian philosophers including Jujun S. Suriasumantri and Gunawan Adnan. The findings reveal that general philosophy plays a crucial role in shaping critical, rational, and systematic patterns of thought. Philosophy not only functions as the theoretical foundation of scientific knowledge but also as a means of developing ethical and reflective attitudes toward life. The main characteristics of philosophical thinking include its radical, universal, critical, conceptual, and comprehensive nature. In the modern era, philosophy remains relevant as a reflective framework for addressing moral, social, and technological issues. Therefore, general philosophy serves as the foundation of wisdom and a moral compass for the advancement of knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

Philosophy is the deepest reflection of the human mind's ability to seek truth, wisdom, and the meaning of life. The word "philosophy" comes from the Greek philosophia, meaning "love of wisdom" (philo = love, sophia = wisdom). Thus, philosophy signifies the human effort to understand reality comprehensively and deeply. In science, general philosophy

serves as the conceptual foundation that underpins all branches of knowledge (Zega, 2023:101).

History demonstrates that the development of science has never been separated from the influence of philosophy. In ancient Greece, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle laid the foundations of rational and logical thinking that would later give rise to various branches of modern science. During the golden age of Islam, philosophy developed through the synthesis of reason and revelation by figures such as Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Rushd. This Islamic philosophical tradition later became an intellectual bridge for the rise of thought in Europe (Lubis, 2015: 18; Umam, 2022: 30).

In modern developments, philosophy plays a crucial role in shaping critical and scientific thinking paradigms. René Descartes, with his motto "cogito ergo sum," asserted that conscious thinking is the foundation of all knowledge. Meanwhile, Immanuel Kant examined the limits of reason and emphasized the relationship between empirical experience and human rational structure (Muliadi, 2020: 25). From this emerges the understanding that philosophy does not stop at abstract contemplation, but becomes a tool for analyzing reality and knowledge itself.

However, in the modern era characterized by technological advances, globalization, and the rapid flow of information, humans often lose their reflective abilities. Scientific progress and technology are not always balanced with moral depth and wisdom. Ethical crises, value degradation, and existential problems pose real challenges to modern civilization (Rahmat, 2022:8). It is in this context that philosophy reasserts its role as a guide for science and humanity.

General philosophy not only discusses what is real (ontology), how humans know (epistemology), and the value of that knowledge (axiology), but also fosters awareness of human limitations. In this way, philosophy trains individuals to think systematically, critically, and responsibly regarding their moral and intellectual decisions (Salatalohy & Tuny, 2011:15).

Furthermore, in the Indonesian academic environment, general philosophy plays a strategic role in shaping student character. Through philosophy, students are encouraged to go beyond memorizing concepts to understanding the essence of knowledge and reality holistically. As Jujun S. Suriasumantri emphasizes, science without philosophy is like a building without a foundation, easily collapsing when faced with questions of value (Zega, 2023:110). Thus, general philosophy is not only theoretically relevant but also functional in developing critical, reflective, and virtuous academics.

Therefore, this study aims to comprehensively outline the general meaning of philosophy, its characteristics, and its benefits in modern human life. Using a literature review method, this article examines the thoughts of philosophers across time to discover a unified view that philosophy is a timeless human endeavor to understand the essence of existence and the wisdom of life.

METHOD RESEARCH

This study uses a literature review as the primary approach to understanding the nature of basic social sciences, particularly within the context of the role of lecturers and collaborative discussions. This method was chosen because it aims to collect, evaluate, and analyze various relevant scientific sources, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of basic social science concepts and practices (Cahyono et al., 2019).

The research process begins with identifying literature sources, including textbooks, journal articles, academic papers, and other relevant publications. Literature selection criteria include relevance to the research topic, the credibility of the author or publisher, and the currency of the information. The selected literature is then analyzed qualitatively to

highlights various perspectives on general philosophy, its meaning, characteristics, and benefits (Ridwan et al., 2021).

Finally, the results of the literature review are presented in narrative form, integrating findings from diverse sources, providing a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the research topic. Thus, this study not only describes existing theories but also provides reflective insights into general philosophy learning practices.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

1. Philosophy

Understanding philosophy is a crucial starting point for understanding the entire body of philosophical thought. Through the definition and etymology of philosophy, one can grasp its essence, scope, and orientation. This explanation of the meaning of philosophy also demonstrates how figures from various eras, from classical to Islamic, modern to contemporary, have made diverse conceptual contributions, yet remain focused on humanity's quest for ultimate truth.

Etymologically, the term philosophy comes from the Greek philosophia, which is

composed of philo (love) and sophia (wisdom). Thus, philosophy means "love of wisdom," namely the human tendency to seek and love profound truth. As the Arabic language developed, this term was adopted as falsafah, and later became known in Indonesian as filosofia (Zega, 2023: 101).

The terminology of philosophy varies widely and is subjective, depending on the individual's perspective. Philosophers define philosophy according to their own philosophical tendencies (Rewita, 2022: 756).

Following are some of the views of classical Western figures on philosophy:

1) Socrates: Philosophy is the effort to understand oneself and explore moral knowledge through dialogue and critical questioning (Lubis, 2015:18). Considering the meaning of philosophy as constructed by Socrates, it is no exaggeration to state: "The unexamined life is not worth living." That a life that is unexamined and unquestioned is a life that is worthless (Fadli & Miftahuddin, 2021:
2) Plato: philosophy is the path of reason to attain knowledge about the world of ideas as true reality (Umam, 1385:12).
3) Aristotle: philosophy is a science that investigates the causes and first principles of all things, so that it becomes the most universal science (Muliadi, 2020:25).
4) Pythagoras: philosophy is understood as the “love of wisdom” which views life as a search for harmony through numbers and ratios (Adnan, 2020:49)

Some definitions of philosophy according to classical Islamic figures are as follows:

1) Al-Kindi: philosophy is knowledge of the essence of all things to the best of human ability, which is ultimately in line with the truth of revelation (Umam, 2022:30).
2) Al-Farabi: philosophy is a means of achieving the highest happiness by understanding rational reality, both the cosmos and society (Lubis, 2015:21).
3) Ibn Sina: philosophy is an effort to understand reality as a whole, including metaphysics, logic, and natural sciences (Muliadi, 2020:29).
4) Ibn Rushd: philosophy is rational reasoning to understand sharia, which proves the harmony between philosophy and religion (Adnan, 2020:53).
5) Al-Ghazali: philosophy is a product of human reason that is useful as long as it does not contradict revelation; he emphasized the limitations of reason in reaching divine reality (Lubis, 2015:24).

The definition of philosophy according to modern figures is as follows:

1) René Descartes: philosophy is the basis of all science, starting from the consciousness of thinking

   *cogito ergo sum*as a source of certainty (Lubis, 2015:27).

2) Immanuel Kant: philosophy is a science that examines the limits of reason, distinguishing phenomena (the visible world) from noumena (reality in itself) (Umam, 2022:37).
3) Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: philosophy is knowledge of absolute ideas that develop through historical dialectics (Muliadi, 2020:34).

   The definition of philosophy according to contemporary figures is as follows:

1) Bertrand Russell: philosophy is an effort to answer fundamental questions critically and systematically, even though it does not always find a final answer (Nawawi, 2017:52).
2) Martin Heidegger: philosophy is the search for the meaning of human existence (Sein) in the world, through existential analysis (Umam, 2022:40).
3) Ludwig Wittgenstein: philosophy is the activity of clarifying language, not theory, with the aim of unraveling the chaos of concepts (Adnan, 2020:55).

General philosophy is a philosophy that addresses the most fundamental issues of reality, knowledge, and values, making it comprehensive and universal. On the other hand, there is also special philosophy that applies philosophical principles to specific fields, such as legal philosophy, political philosophy, or religious philosophy. Thus, general philosophy serves as a conceptual foundation, while special philosophy represents its application (Nawawi, 2017:41)

General philosophy has several scopes such as:

1) Ontology: discusses the nature of "being" or reality. Questions that arise include: what is meant by existence, how does existence occur, and what is the essence of nature, humans, and God (Umam, 2022:45).
2) Epistemology: discusses the nature of knowledge. Main questions include: how knowledge is obtained, what its sources and limits are, and how to distinguish between truth and error (Lubis, 2015:31).
3) Axiology: discusses the nature of values, including moral, aesthetic, and scientific utility. The crucial question asked is: what is the basis for calling an action good, beautiful, or beneficial (Muliadi, 2020:38).

Furthermore, general philosophy also plays a significant role in intellectual and

practical life. It provides a conceptual framework for understanding reality holistically, serves as a theoretical foundation for the development of science, and fosters critical, reflective, and wise attitudes in dealing with life's challenges (Salatalohy & Tuny, 2011:59).

2. History and Development of Philosophy

The history of philosophy is a long record of humanity's intellectual journey in understanding reality. Through history, we can trace the development of philosophy from its earliest traditions in Greece and the East, through the golden age of Islamic philosophy, to the birth of modern and contemporary thought. An analysis of the history of philosophy is essential for understanding the dynamics of ideas and their contributions to civilization, as well as for understanding the socio-cultural context underlying each period of philosophical thought.

The history of philosophy began in Ancient Greece around the 6th century BC. During this period, humans began to abandon mythological explanations and turn to rational reasoning to understand reality. Socrates is known as a figure who emphasized critical dialogue to discover moral truth through self-introspection (Lubis, 2015:18). Plato, Socrates' student, developed the theory of the world of ideas as the true, eternal reality. For him, the sensory world was merely a shadow of the perfect world of ideas (Umam, 2022:12). Aristotle then complemented the foundations of Greek philosophy with an empirical approach, formal logic, and the classification of sciences. He emphasized that philosophy is a science that investigates the causes and first principles of all things (Salatalohy & Tuny, 2011:21).

Besides the Greek tradition, philosophy also developed in the East. In India, philosophical systems such as Vedanta, Samkhya, and Buddhism emerged, emphasizing the search for inner enlightenment and freedom from suffering (Nawawi, 2017:39). In China, Confucius emphasized the importance of social ethics and harmony, while Laozi, through his Taoist teachings, emphasized harmony with nature and the principle of wu wei, or non-coercion (Adnan, 2020:51). In Egypt, philosophy was rooted in the concepts of the cosmos, divinity, and the immortality of the soul. These ideas then exerted a significant influence on the Greek philosophical tradition through cultural interaction (Lubis, 2015:20).

Meanwhile, Islamic philosophy began to develop rapidly in the 9th century CE through the translation of Greek works into Arabic. This process took place in centers of learning such as the Bayt al-Hikmah in Baghdad and gave birth to a new intellectual tradition that combined Greek philosophy with Islamic values (Lubis, 2015:22). Some Muslim philosophers who played a role during this era include:

1. Al-Kindi, considered the first Muslim philosopher, defined philosophy as knowledge

of the essence of things to the best of human ability, ultimately in line with the truth of revelation (Umam, 2022:30).

2. Al-Farabi developed a comprehensive philosophical system, particularly through his work Al-Madina al-Fadila. He emphasized the importance of reason in achieving ultimate happiness (Salatalohy & Tuny, 2011:45).
3. Ibn Sina contributed philosophical thought through his monumental works, Al-Syifa and Al-Qanun fi al-Thibb. He viewed philosophy as an effort to understand reality holistically, encompassing metaphysics, logic, and natural science (Muliadi, 2020:29).
4. Al-Ghazali criticized the tendencies of rationalist philosophy in his work Tahafut al Falasifah. He emphasized the limitations of reason in reaching divine reality and positioned revelation as a higher source of knowledge (Lubis, 2015:24).
5. Ibn Rushd defended the role of philosophy in Islam in his work Tahafut al-Tahafut. He argued that philosophy does not contradict Islamic law but is instead aligned with uncovering the truth (Adnan, 2020:53)

Furthermore, Islamic philosophy also played a significant role in the development of science. The thoughts of Muslim philosophers spurred advances in medicine, mathematics, astronomy, and logic. These contributions later became a crucial foundation for the intellectual renaissance in Europe (Nawawi, 2017:42).

Entering the 15th century, Europe experienced the Renaissance, a resurgence of interest in Greco-Roman science and culture. This period emphasized rationality, freedom of thought, and human autonomy in the development of science (Lubis, 2015:26).

The 17th and 18th centuries are known as the Age of Enlightenment. During this period, reason was considered the primary source of knowledge and progress. René Descartes emerged as the father of modern philosophy, with his motto "cogito ergo sum," which established conscious thinking as the foundation of certain knowledge (Umam, 2022:37).

Immanuel Kant then introduced a critical philosophy that attempted to synthesize rationalism and empiricism. He distinguished between phenomena (the world as it appears to humans) and noumena (reality in itself that cannot be reached by sensory experience) (Salatalohy & Tuny, 2011:55).

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel continued the tradition of modern philosophy by introducing historical dialectics, in which history is understood as the development of the absolute spirit through contradictions (Muliadi, 2020:34).

Furthermore, Karl Marx developed the theory of historical materialism, which

emphasized that societal change occurs through class conflict and economic factors (Adnan, 2020:60). Concurrently, positivism, pioneered by Auguste Comte, also emerged. Positivism asserts that valid knowledge can only be obtained through empirical and scientific methods, thus philosophy serves as the foundation for science (Nawawi, 2017:46).

3. Characteristics of General Philosophy

The general characteristics of philosophy serve as markers that distinguish it from other sciences. Through these characteristics, we can understand how philosophy works: from its radical, comprehensive, and critical thinking to its universal nature. The description of philosophy's characteristics not only confirms its identity as a discipline but also explains the distinctive methods and orientations of philosophical thought. (Salatalohy & Tuny, 2011: 15-16) put forward eight main characteristics:

1. Radical, thinking to the deepest roots of the problem.
2. Universal, encompassing all reality without disciplinary boundaries.
3. Conceptual, the result of generalization and abstraction of experience.
4. Coherent and consistent, subject to logic.
5. Comprehensive, explains the reality thoroughly.
6. Systematic, arranged sequentially and logically.
7. Free, not bound by dogma or external authority.
8. Responsible, demanding intellectual honesty over one's own thoughts.

Philosophy is also reflective, critical, and open to correction. These characteristics make philosophy a means of developing mature reasoning (Umam, 2022:22). Philosophy trains analytical and synthetic skills and moral sensitivity.

In addition to the characteristics of thinking, philosophy has an object, which is a fundamental aspect in understanding the essence of philosophy itself. Broadly speaking, the objects of philosophy are divided into material objects and formal objects. Discussion of both demonstrates how philosophy not only investigates what exists but also how that something is fundamentally understood.

The material object of philosophy is everything that exists. This means that philosophy focuses on all of reality without limiting itself to a specific empirical scope. The three main points of the material object of philosophy are God, the universe, and humanity (Salatalohy & Tuny, 2011:16).

The formal object of philosophy is its perspective on reality. This differs from specialized science, which limits itself to specific aspects (Salatalohy & Tuny, 2011:14).

Philosophy views objects such as:

(a) Radical, because it investigates to the root of the problem.

(b) Fundamental, because it tries to find the first principles and principles.

(c) Comprehensive, because it does not limit itself to a particular part of reality.

Although philosophy and science are closely related, they have fundamental differences in terms of object, method, and purpose. It's important to understand these differences to avoid confusion about how to position each as a form of knowledge.

(1) In terms of objects of study, science focuses on specific and limited aspects. Science limits itself to certain material objects that can be observed empirically. For example, biology studies living things, physics studies natural phenomena, and sociology studies social phenomena. In contrast, philosophy focuses on the deepest essence or principles of reality. Philosophy asks not only "what" something is, but also "why" and "how" it exists. In other words, science discusses the parts, while philosophy examines the whole (Umam, 2022:28). In terms of method, science is empirical. This means that scientific truth is obtained through observation, experimentation, and verification that can be repeatedly tested. Scientific knowledge must be proven by measurable facts. In contrast, philosophy is more rational-reflective. Philosophy relies on logical reasoning and in-depth reflection to achieve truth. It does not demand empirical evidence alone, but rather emphasizes logical consistency and fundamental argumentation (Salatalohy & Tuny, 2011:26).

(2) In terms of purpose, science aims to explain certain phenomena and produce theories that can be put into practice. For example, medicine aims to treat disease, and engineering aims to make human life easier. Meanwhile, philosophy aims to discover ultimate truths that go beyond mere practical application. Philosophy seeks to understand the meaning of life, moral values, and the principles that underpin knowledge itself. Therefore, philosophy is often referred to as the most fundamental reflection of human reason (Nawawi, 2017:54).

(3) Philosophy is universal, while science is partial. Science develops into specialized disciplines with limited scope. Conversely, philosophy seeks to see the interconnections between various disciplines and place them within a broader picture. This enables philosophy to serve as a conceptual and methodological foundation for all branches of knowledge (Zega, 2023:113).

However, despite their differences, philosophy and science complement each other.

Philosophy provides direction, foundation, and critical reflection for science, while science enriches philosophy with empirical data. In the modern context, the relationship between the two can be seen in the philosophy of science, which examines the scientific foundations, validity of methods, and the ethics of scientific development (Rahmat, 2022:9). Thus, philosophy and science are not two opposing entities, but rather two forms of knowledge that interact to develop human understanding of reality

DISCUSSION

1. Benefits of General Philosophy

a. Theoretical Benefits

Philosophy provides the ontological, epistemological, and axiological foundations for all science. It helps answer questions about what science studies, how knowledge is acquired, and what it is used for (Umam, 2022:27). Philosophy also fosters consistency of thought and serves as a platform for the birth of new scientific theories (Lubis, 2015:33).

Furthermore, philosophy broadens knowledge and worldview. Because the material object of philosophy is everything that exists, philosophy teaches the integration of various aspects of life, from humans to the universe to God. This comprehensive perspective fosters an open attitude toward differences in disciplines and fosters a broad outlook on life (Nawawi, 2017:53).

Contemporary studies also emphasize that the theoretical benefits of philosophy are evident in its ability to provide a conceptual framework for scientific research. As explained in the journal Philosophy of Science, philosophical reflection helps critique the basic assumptions of a scientific theory and provides direction for the development of new paradigms (Rahmat, 2022:9). Thus, the theoretical benefits of philosophy never become obsolete but continue to thrive in the development of science.

b. Practical Benefits

In everyday life, philosophy serves as an ethical guideline that guides human behavior. It teaches the courage to think critically, the ability to weigh the values of good and evil, and an open attitude toward differences (Salatalohy & Tuny, 2011:18). Philosophy frees humans from the shackles of superstition and irrational prejudice.

Through philosophical reflection, humans can judge what is good and what is bad and determine a meaningful direction in life. Philosophy thus becomes a moral and ethical guide in life (Adnan, 2020:61).

Philosophy also serves to free humanity from ignorance and myth. History records that Greek philosophy emerged as a reaction to irrational mythological explanations. To this day, philosophy continues to function by freeing humanity from illogical or superstitious beliefs and guiding it toward rational thought (Muliadi, 2020:36).

Philosophy serves to foster a critical, rational, and open attitude. The process of philosophical thought requires humans to boldly question things considered certain, test every truth, and be willing to listen to differing perspectives. This attitude encourages the growth of tolerance, appreciation for plurality, and the ability to engage in dialogue, which are crucial in a pluralistic society (Salatalohy & Tuny, 2011:18).

c. Academic and Social Benefits

Science has experienced rapid development and significantly influenced human life. However, despite this progress, fundamental questions remain regarding the nature of knowledge, how it is acquired, and the limits of its application. These questions demonstrate the crucial role of the philosophy of science as a critical reflection on the basis and direction of knowledge development (Reyvani et al., 2025:502).

In an academic context, general philosophy holds a strategic position as the foundation of higher education. This study provides an ontological, epistemological, and axiological framework for students to understand and develop their fields of study (Salatalohy and Tuny 2011:65). Through a philosophical approach, students are trained to think systematically, critically, and reflectively, enabling them to navigate various global challenges and the complexities of modern information (Adnan 2020:67).

The philosophy of science also plays a role in guiding the development of science so that it remains ethically responsible and inseparable from the dimension of morality (Zega 2023: 110). Furthermore, general philosophy helps strengthen national character by instilling the values of democracy, tolerance, and pluralism, which are essential for social integrity and national life (Rahmat 2022: 10).

Thus, general philosophy not only functions theoretically and practically, but also has significant social and national impact. It becomes a meansthe formation of academic ethics, scientific integrity, and moral awareness in the development of

civilized science.

d. Relevance in the Modern Era

In the era of globalization, philosophy remains highly relevant in modern human life. Advances in science and technology have brought about significant changes, but at the same time, they have also given rise to a crisis of values, moral degradation, and a loss of life orientation. In this situation, philosophy plays a role in providing a solid normative foundation through ethical and axiological reflection to prevent humanity from losing its way amidst the dynamics of social change (Zega 2023:112).

Furthermore, philosophy serves as a foundation for moral, social, and political decision-making. The complexity of contemporary issues such as the environment, economic globalization, and social justice demands a philosophical framework so that every policy is not only pragmatic but also rooted in ethical and humanitarian considerations (Rahmat 2022:8). Thus, philosophy serves as a reflective instrument that ensures strategic decision-making consistently aligns with universal human values.

Philosophy also plays a critical role in the development of science and technology. Advances in information technology, artificial intelligence, and biotechnology present new ethical challenges related to human dignity and environmental sustainability. Through the branches of philosophy of science and ethics, humans are encouraged to assess and control the direction of technological development to ensure it remains aligned with moral values and the public good (Umam 2022: 41).

Furthermore, the relevance of philosophy in the modern era is also evident in its role in strengthening understanding of the plurality of truths and the importance of tolerance. Philosophy helps society cultivate a dialogical and inclusive awareness amidst the diversity of views and the increasing potential for identity conflict in the global world (Nawawi 2017:57).

Thus, philosophy not only has a theoretical function in explaining reality, but also a practical function as a moral, social and critical guide that ensures the direction of the development of science and technology remains oriented towards humanity.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that general philosophy is a branch of philosophy that holds a fundamental place in the development of science and the formation of human consciousness. Philosophy stems from an intellectual drive to seek the essence of reality, knowledge, and the values that underlie all aspects of life. Through the thoughts of philosophers from classical, Islamic, modern, and contemporary times, it can be concluded that philosophy has always played a role in guiding the direction of human civilization, ensuring that it is not separated from wisdom and moral responsibility.

General philosophy is characterized by distinctive thinking: radical, universal, critical, systematic, and responsible. It demands that humans think to the root of problems, see reality holistically, and logically and reflectively examine every form of knowledge. Unlike empirical science, which is bound to limited objects, philosophy is comprehensive and reflective of the foundations and goals of knowledge itself.

In terms of benefits, philosophy has three important dimensions:

1. Theoretical, namely as a conceptual basis for science and scientific research.
2. Practical, namely as an ethical and moral guide in life.
3. Academic-social, as a builder of students' intellectual character and a guardian of the direction of scientific progress so that it remains of humanitarian value.

In the context of the modern era, philosophy plays a strategic role in addressing the value crisis and ethical challenges of technological progress. The philosophy of science, in particular, serves as a bridge between scientific rationality and moral wisdom. Through philosophical reflection, humans understand not only the "what" and "how" of something, but also the "why" and "why" of something.

Thus, general philosophy is not only important academically but also existentially. It shapes individuals who are wise, critical, and responsible toward life, knowledge, and society. In Indonesian education, the study of general philosophy must continue to be fostered so that the younger generation can develop reflective thinking skills and remain oriented amidst the rapid flow of globalized knowledge.

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