

Philosophical Systems

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KIN 161
Philosophical Perspectives of Sport

The Case for Philosophy

- Interdisciplinary research has gained favor and is becoming fairly common
 - By approaching research questions from many angles these answers are often more quickly determined and more robust
 - How can Philosophy be added to the mix of academic inquiry on practical questions?
 - Let's use an example:

The Case for Philosophy (cont.)

- Ex: **Is play good for both adults and children?**
- Each discipline adds a layer of understanding (but, perhaps, each on its own can provide too narrow a focus)

The Case for Philosophy (cont.)

- Chemistry: Is there a change in brain chemistry for both player and non players? Does it function differently for adults? Children?
- Physiology: How does play affect physiological development?

The Case for Philosophy (cont.)

- Sociology: How do different cultures or socioeconomic groups view play of children? Adults?
- Psychology: Do children who have good play experiences grow up with more self confidence? Does play have a similar effect on adults?
- Philosophy: What is play? Does it come in different gradations (such as deep play or shallow play)? Are children more likely to experience deep or shallow play? How about adults?

The value of philosophical questions

- Tends to ask "prior" types of questions.
 - In the last example assuming that play is good presupposes we all know what play (and games or sport) are in the first place.
 - Philosophy demands that we not take this for granted – always questioning...
- The nature of the natural and cosmic world
The notion of right actions
The idea of what is beautiful
The conception of a valid (truthful) argument

The Branches of Philosophy

- **Metaphysics (literally *after physics*)**
- Beyond nature or natural world
- Study of the nature of ultimate reality
- Discern what is *really* real
- Reflects holistic understanding of human existence (both mind and body, psychic discovery, spirituality)
- Ultimate nature of existence & of reality and experience

Branches of Philosophy (cont.)

- Big explanatory systems (typically)
- Questions about the nature of things
- Concerned with what things and actions are
- How they are similar or dissimilar to each other
- Can be descriptive

Branches of Philosophy (cont.)

- Metaphysics is typically split into two main fields: Ontology & Cosmology
- Ontology: the science of being
(These are the *parts* that might be included in a metaphysical system of explanation)
 - How to determine being-in-the-world
 - nature of existence
 - meaning of experience
 - determining the ultimate reality—what is real (how do you know)

Branches of Philosophy (cont.)

- Cosmology: ultimate structure of universe
 - Darwin's theory of evolution
 - Creationism (the unmoved mover)
 - Intelligent Design – Is intelligent design just a variation of creationism?
 - W. Paley (1802) God: *The Divine Watchmaker?*
 - Big Bang Theory
 - Other “natural” arguments

Branches of Philosophy (cont.)

- **Epistemology: What do people know.**
- Sorting out issues concerned with human knowledge
- A priori knowledge, true independent of experience (are we born with innate “knowledge”)
- A study of knowledge and how to gain it
- Investigates origin, nature, methods and limits of human knowledge.
- Rationalists (Descartes) v. Empiricists (Locke)

In Class Activity:

- Exercise:
- On your own, make a list of five items for the following questions:
- What do you know?
- How would you defend and confirm what you know?
- How would you seek to find out more about these things?
- Now, in groups of 4-5 discuss/defend your answers and create a “top-ten” list of the things you know - be sure to answer questions 2 & 3 as well.

Branches of Philosophy (cont.)

- **Axiology:** Questions about the value of things.
- Two main categories – Aesthetics & Ethics
- **Aesthetics:** Values related to beauty.
- For ex: Which sports are evaluated not only on the level of difficulty but also on *aesthetics* (what is appealing and/or beautiful to the human eye) at the Olympic level.
- Evaluation of different sport forms aesthetically often involves a panel of judges such as figure skating, gymnastics, diving, and the like.

Branches of Philosophy (cont.)

- **Ethics** – Values related to human conduct.
- What behavior is judged as right or wrong – appropriate and inappropriate?
- What behavior is moral and immoral? why?
- Is it relative?
- Are there Universals?
- Stop & Think:
 - Identify ethical issues related to different areas of specialization in your expected career.

Branches of Philosophy (cont.)

- **Logic:** study or attempt to discern proper from improper inference & validity vs. invalidity primarily in argument.
- Logic investigates and classifies the structure of statements and arguments
- Both formal & informal

Conclusions

- Philosophy, and questions addressed from a philosophical perspective add to a greater understanding of the nature of reality.
- These questions are everywhere (even in Kinesiology)!
- Uses a reflective methodology
- Has practical applications (applied ethics for example)