

Observations in Philosophy

How do we use empiricism to best effect in philosophy?

The nature of philosophy

Philosophy is said to relate to the big picture - *It is about trying to see how things in the wider sense hang together in the wider sense.* (Raymond Tallis) - and generally said to eschew insider knowledge - *Philosophy is the name we give to a collection of questions which are of deep interest to us and for which there isn't any specialist way of answering.* (Paul Snowdon). Hence the default stance appears to be avoiding specifics while philosophising?

A student reflected .. *In my philosophy classes I learn what's true, but when I'm reading a novel I understand the weight of what's true.* This suggests we need an emotional connection with everyday life to make philosophy meaningful.

If the quotes above are reliable how can we harmonise both requirements?

Working at two levels

Science was born as a subset of Philosophy, and then broke away with the term *Natural Philosophy* drifting out of use. However if Philosophy relies on truth, why not use observations to help out. As deduction is rarely free of induction or real world observation it might be tempting to give up on the distinction. But what about usefully limiting philosophical empiricism to common knowledge and quotidian observation? How restrictive is this considering everyone's opportunity to observe the human condition, animal behaviour, physical laws, etc.. first hand. When exactly does psychology become a specialised discipline? If we allow ourselves to become enmeshed in detail what is the cost to our ability to consider meaning and how aspects of reality fit together.

Discernment

Moving from the abstract to the material and allowing emotions in seems to have the side effect of instinctive judgment becoming almost irresistible. How much might this desire to support or demote policies and actors interfere with our ability to think imaginatively? Can we begin to comprehend issues and be politically active simultaneously? Is it still possible to care without judging?

If you have 15 minutes to spare here's a more leisurely stimulus: <https://philosophybites.com/2014/08/tamar-gendler-on-why-philosophers-use-examples.html>