



PHILOSOPHY, THE MOTHER OF ALL SCIENCES: A CHALLENGE TO FUTURE SCIENTISTS

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ABSTRACT

The problem is that the ills of modernity, inability for reflective and meditative lifestyle and asking the important "why" questions, and life of consumerism generated by the arrogance of scientism have downplayed the utmost importance of philosophy, relegating it to the background. But the timeless character of philosophy, the mother of all sciences defies all the barrels of attacks levelled against it by scientism. Its eternal nature, as the primordial foundation of all human knowledge, is made possible because of its operation at the rational and conceptual realms unlike science. Attacks on it could be likened to the perching of a grasshopper on the trunk of an iroko tree with the sole aim of shaking it to push it down which is unrealizable. Through conceptual and critical analysis, this paper unveiled the inherent sturdy nature of philosophy that defies unfoundational attacks from scientism, which on itself (science), is somehow built on debris, with particular reference to its unstability given its unending paradigm shifts in contrast to philosophy which it always attacks. The paper concludes that philosophy is not dead, irrelevant, a meaningless venture as purported, but important, valid, enduring, and a challenge to future scientists that should pursue the path of philosophy in solidifying the foundation of science.

Keywords: *Philosophy, Science, Scientism, Relevance, Contemporary Society.*

INTRODUCTION

People always ask, why do people waste their time and energy studying this useless course called Philosophy? Of what relevance is it when many who studied it ended up not getting any job, and some got unreasonable ones? If the study of science (like Medicine, Nursing, Medical Laboratory, etc) offers people good and sustainable jobs with good salary scales, why waste time with this philosophy that is synonymous with unnecessary and endless arguments and philosophizing which bakes no

bread? These and more are the raging questions going on in people's minds, even among scholars. The pertinent question is, if philosophy is not like science with its wait-and-take characteristic in terms of immediate production of seen products, does it nullify its importance? Does Mathematics (and other similar courses) bake bread? Why is it still studied? Questions like these and more are the reasons for writing this paper. However, questions and negative attitudes stamped on one's cherished discipline are highly disturbing. Sequel to that, the urgent need to unravel the gold mine in this highly important and timeless discipline (philosophy) is imperative. This is so given the fact that truth must be told, at least for its liberating power which uncovers mischief. As houses can not stand and last unless built on solid foundations, so are many things in life. A solid foundation is a superstructure upon which edifices and ideas can stand. Philosophy takes this position. It stands as the superstructure for all knowledge and ideas, upon which all other disciplines build and stand. A total collapse of everything is imminent if philosophy is neglected or rejected as intended by scientism, which is the belief that the methods of science are applicable in all inquiry, especially in the human and social sciences¹.

Philosophy, the mother of all sciences is timeless and challenges future scientists and their attacks targeted to downplay its global importance and relevance in this 21st century. It is timeless, important, evergreen, and enjoys a perennial status in the world, despite its high difficult intellectual engagement to gain wisdom.

Brief Overview of Philosophy and Science

In its etymological derivation, the word "Philosophy" is from the Greek words "Philo" (love) and "Sophia" (wisdom). Etymologically, it means Love of Wisdom. Philosophy is defined as the rational, abstract, and methodical consideration of reality as a whole or of fundamental dimensions of human existence and experience². However, in a broad sense, philosophy is an activity people undertake when they seek to understand fundamental truths about themselves, the world in which they live, and their relationships to the world and to each other³. It deals with the act of pursuing wisdom which is the wisdom of man as man, acquired through the difficulties of intellectual labour. Philosophy neither accommodates mental passivity, unquestioned assumptions of things nor reliance on superficialities and appearances. This is one of the reasons why people run away from it, as it is mainly for those who have satisfied

their basic necessities of life (those who are really ready and willing to devote their time and energy and go through the rigours of intellectual reflections so as to answer or solve some philosophical questions and problems). It seeks for that knowledge which embodies all other knowledge in the area in question, which gives a thing its basic comprehension or ultimate intelligibility.

Philosophy is different from science. The word "Science" is etymologically derived from the Latin word "Scientia" which means "knowledge". It is any system of knowledge that is concerned with the physical world and its phenomena and that entails unbiased observations and systematic experimentation⁴. Science encompasses the systematic study of the structure and behaviour of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment⁵. Its concern is with the pursuit of knowledge that encompasses general truths or the operations of fundamental laws. It should be noted that the major objectives of science have to do with understanding the functional role of nature and explaining it in a complete form, providing the knowledge of the laws of nature through experimental verification, and controlling nature through the application of experimental results obtained through keen observation.

The Disjuncture and Nexus between Philosophy and Science

For proper evaluation of philosophy in this 21st century, based on the assertions of scientism and others against it as dead and meaningless venture, attention should be paid to the approaches and methodologies of philosophy in relation to science. This will forestall the unmediated and irrational statements against philosophy that are bound to ensue from many angles. Historically, everything including science was part and parcel of philosophy before regaining their autonomy. There are many sources of knowledge, such as sensory knowledge (empiricism), rational knowledge (rationalism), intuition, etc. Science follows more the line of empiricism and rejects a priori knowledge which is welcomed by philosophy as justifiable. This is the genesis of the problem between philosophy and science (scientism). As Science is a systematic and logical approach to discovering how things in the universe work⁶, philosophy is the systematic study of human knowledge with an emphasis on the conditions of its validity and finding answers to ultimate questions. While every other science aims at investigating a specific area of

knowledge, such as physics or psychology, philosophy has been defined as thinking about thinking⁷.

It is evident that their aims, objectives and methodologies are dissimilar. However, as science concentrates on empirical knowledge, philosophy equally concentrates on it and also on a priori knowledge. While both philosophy and science are about contingent truths or facts, philosophy equally concentrates on necessary truths. In the same vein, both philosophy and science look for descriptive facts, Philosophy searches more about normative and evaluative truths. And in as much as both of them concentrate on physical objects, philosophy equally concentrates on abstract objects, which are beyond the purview of science. Though there may be some philosophers who are on the opposing camp with regard to the acceptance of some of these concepts like a priori facts, they are part and parcel of philosophy, despite any disagreement(s). These differences and similarities should be noted and not neglected for clarity purposes in order to fully understand philosophy and its mode of operation and aim.

The position of William Reville in his article titled "Philosophers Must Oppose Arrogance of Scientism" unveiled an important fact. He stated thus:

The modern world runs on science-based technology, and nobody seriously disputes the importance of science. This importance has tempted many eminent scientists to adopt a dismissive attitude called "scientism" toward other disciplines. Scientism applies science to address questions in areas where science has no competence. But scientism is simply wrong, and might have disastrous consequences for science if allowed to develop. Philosophy has an important role in identifying areas where science has competence, but, by and large, philosophers are not confronting scientism⁸.

This points to the cause of the whole problem (scientism and its attacks on philosophy as well as its supremacy claims). But the truth still resurfaced that philosophy, being the mother of all sciences still plays an important role in identifying areas where science has competence, a show of superiority.

Philosophy's Subsisting Instrumentum Labore and Weapons

This sub-topic captioned, "Philosophy's subsisting Instrumentum Labore and Weapons" may appear unreasonable or not well coined at first sight, but it is not. It is a deliberate choice of words and coinage based on philosophy's current neglect as dead and inferior to science. All disciplines regained autonomy from philosophy, leaving it with the remaining branches like Logic, Epistemology, Metaphysics, Ethics, General Ethics, Special Ethics, Human Act, Freedom, Aesthetics, etc. These are philosophy's surviving tools (instrumentum labore), and they, like ammunitions used during war fare to defeat the enemy troops, perform such function in philosophy's battles in deciphering between logical and illogical reasonings, knowledge and what is not knowledge, good and evil etc., and immorality in relation to virtuous living. To say that a discipline that gave birth to all other disciplines in the world is dead, irrelevant, and a meaningless chatter is heartrending. Metaphysics for instance, deals with the nature of reality, what the realities in the world are like, and its order. Philosophers are bothered with questions like: Does God exist? What is truth? What is a person, and what makes a person remain the same all through? Is the world made of matter? Do people have minds, and how is it related to the body, if yes? Do we have free wills? What initiates events (causality)?

For Epistemology, which deals with knowledge, concerns itself with what one can know about the world and how it can be achieved. It battles with questions like: What is knowledge? Do we know anything at all? How do we know what we claim to know? Can we be justified in claiming to have known certain things?

Ethics on the other hand deals with the rightness or wrongness of actions, what we ought to do and what we ought not to do. It is bothered with solving questions like: What is good? What is it that makes actions or people good? What is right, and what makes actions right? What is morality? Is it objective or subjective? How should I treat other people?

Logic is another very important branch that deals with logical reasoning. It is used by philosophers in studying the nature and structure of arguments. It concerns itself with questions like: What makes one's reasoning good or bad? How can one determine whether a given piece of reasoning is good or bad?

It is pertinent to make it known that the intention here is not to exhaust the exposition of all these remaining branches of philosophy but to show how they serve as its tools and weapons in the execution of its tasks. The

aim is to show that philosophy is still competent enough to follow its rational course in the bid to solve the "why" questions (and others) as an enterprise that is imbued with integrity in the pursuance of wisdom which it loves.

The Perenniality of Philosophy

Philosophy is a perennial discipline. Some argue on the contrary, or as stated earlier that it is dead, meaningless, or irrelevant. People are free to take various positions or stands on some issues. People have said that scientists are occultic, and science on the other hand is of the devil. This necessitates this question, are those assertions correct? People have aversions for different things even in courses studied in the University. That is why some prefer one course to the other and would fight or disobey their parents in order to study the courses of their choice. Abuse does not take away value (*abusus non tolit usum*). Whatever one says about philosophy depends on how one understands it or means by what is said. There are countless preconceived notions about philosophy which have given rise to those illogical and unconnected assertions against philosophy. Philosophy is for intelligent and sharp minds because it is intellectually highly engaging.

Stephen Hawking's view about philosophy is important at this stage. Stephen Hawking (1942-2018) was an English theoretical physicist, cosmologist, and professor of mathematics at the University of Cambridge. He began his book titled "The Grand Design" by stating thus:

We each exist for but a short time, and in that time explore but a small part of the whole universe. But humans are curious pieces. We wonder, we seek answers. Living in this vast world that is by turns kind and cruel, and gazing at the immense heavens above, people have always asked a multitude of questions: How can we understand the world in which we find ourselves? How does the universe behave? What is the nature of reality? Where did all this come from? Did the universe need a creator? Most of us do not spend most of our time worrying about those questions, but almost most of us worry about them some of the time. Traditionally, these are questions for philosophy, but philosophy is dead. Philosophy has not kept up with modern developments in science, particularly physics. Scientists have become the bearers of the torch of discovery in our quest for knowledge⁹.

Dissecting his ideas as clearly quoted here, it is evident that this is pure scientism (improper scientific claims for supremacy). The pertinent question for him is, why must we explore only but a small part of the whole universe, and not all of it, after all the claims for superiority by scientism? This is a why question which is in the domain of philosophy. Also, when we humans wonder as a curious species and seek answers, has science answered that? If those questions are for philosophy and philosophy is dead as he claims, has science succeeded in answering all of them by becoming the "neo-philosophy" that answers all questions? If no, where lies their claims as the torch bearers of discovery in the quest for knowledge. This is mere "opinionism" devoid of logical and rational foundations.

Additionally, maintaining (Hawking) that philosophy has not kept up with modern developments in science, as a proof for its eventual demise is illogical. The illogicality lies in the fact that philosophy deals with ideas and concepts and not with the physical per se. Physics and science operate at the empirical level with laid down philosophical principles. Science only verifies the validity or workability of those principles in order to confirm their veracity. Philosophy bears the torch of discovery in the quest for knowledge and not science, because it dwells in the domain of ideatic productions. It manufactures ideas and concepts and sells them to science and other disciplines for execution into empirical and seen products for human usage. Also, Hawking forgot to know that the "how", "what", and "where" questions he posited are not as important as the "why" questions of philosophy, and can easily be answered by science because they are verifiable. The "why" questions are the deepest and most important ones that concern humans as rational beings and that is where philosophy bounces back. So, because such questions must surely resurface, philosophy must exist to answer and solve it.

Moreso, his remark that most of us do not spend most of our time worrying about those questions, but almost most of us worry about them some of the time is important. If philosophy is dead as he claimed, no one will worry about those questions. It is that philosophic instinct in us that propels us towards seeking for answers and solutions to them. Some (scientists) may not worry about them, especially about the "why" questions owing to their high level of intellectual engagements, but philosophers prefer and engage in them. Some worry and do the thinking (philosophers) in order to know, gain wisdom and bring out

ideas and master plans for the rest of men. The easy-way-of-life syndrome that has crept in into everything, which is gradually compelling everyone to join the band wagon is among the causes of this idea of seeing philosophy as a dead discipline. It is better termed "philosophobia" (fear of philosophy and philosophical engagements) as many lacks that intellectual stamina philosophy requires to engage in it. Philosophy is not dead as he proposed, but still lives.

Equally, philosophy lives on in the sciences and other disciplines as they all emanated from it. All other disciplines end up their highest academic achievements by badging their doctorate degrees in philosophy (that is, doctor of any discipline, like English, Mathematics, Biochemistry etc., in philosophy). What does it mean? Does it not speak volumes? This is clear and sure sign that philosophy exists as the mother of all sciences in itself while all the other sciences (disciplines) are her children. The child and the mother are inseparable till death, denying this obvious fact is irrational and sin against truth and the obvious. It is worthy of note that positing the fact that philosophy is dead because of its considerations as mental gymnastics, abstract, linguistic articulations and theorizing, and conceptual commentaries based on the advancements of science and technology in this age doesn't hold water. Philosophy has many tentacles and better articulated as "weapons" as noted earlier. Ethics is one. As it seeks for the good of man, it uses its ethical lens and principles to regularize the effects of hypermodernity in this modern and contemporary world for good ethical co-existence and co-habitation among humans. It equally does that epistemologically (Epistemology) to look at what man claims to be knowledge, and questions it (scattering it as weapons do) in order to know if it is true and can stand. Each branch both logic, aesthetics, metaphysics, etc., perform their tasks in this manner, whenever and wherever they are needed.

THE GLOBAL IMPACT AND RELEVANCE OF PHILOSOPHY

Frederick Copleston, in the first volume of his book titled "A History of Philosophy" stated thus:

We would scarcely call anyone "educated" who had no knowledge whatsoever of history; we all recognise that a man should know something of the history of his own country, its political, social and economic development, its literary and artistic achievements, preferably indeed in the wider setting of European and, to a certain extent, even World history¹⁰.

It is clear here once again that we need to know our history, which the history of thought (philosophy) is number one. The question is, why are people moving away from philosophy to other disciplines? Is it a sign that it is no longer important and relevant? A closer look at the current behaviours and tendencies of people moving towards easy life will give a little clue to one of the reasons for the drift away from philosophy. In this 21st century which is the age of science and technology with countless advancements, things have been made easy for man. Calculators and computers make many calculations and researches as the case may be easier for man. How many people can do calculations now without calculators and computers? How many can do researches by perusing through some books if not through the internet? Likewise, many people are not willing again and cannot stand the intellectual struggles involved in rational thoughts and arguments in order to arrive at reasonable conclusions on some ideas and concepts.

The philosophical enterprise deals with unaided human reasonings in relation to finding the truth and valid solutions to some raging problems. Many who are poor in reasoning tend to run away and blackmail philosophy as a fruitless venture. They say, why waste my time when there are other options (other things to engage in or study). Easy life is now the norm. Philosophy, just like other hard courses like Mathematics are for real men who have sharp brains and the required resilience to go through the rigours or hurdles involved in its intellectual encounter. People have forgotten that out of difficulties heroes emerge. Most of the greatest intellectuals in history have been philosophers, and among scientists, are those who were philosopher-scientists.

However, philosophy helps in analytic and critical thinking. Renowned scientists even today have been those who follow logical and philosophical paths to conclusion and results. The current situation of the world necessitates the need for proper philosophical reflection. The actual meaning of philosophy as the path to understanding and meaning should be re-enthroned than allowing any attempt aimed at reducing philosophy for science to prevail. This will lead to proper understanding of philosophy, synthesis of scientific discovery and real quest for ethical and spiritual values that will stabilize our world. Philosophy always goes back to its root, "love of wisdom". It was Pythagoras who was credited with being the first person to use it. For him, wisdom belongs to the

"gods" and finite beings like us cannot own it, but can only love it. The act of knowing and loving was combined by this Greek intellectual. People have forgotten this dimension of philosophical knowledge that is fundamental. What is the meaning of wisdom? It goes beyond information and data, embracing science and philosophy, with a different order of reality. For Aristotle, wisdom has to do with the understanding of causes, that is, knowing why things are as they are. The "why" question in wisdom is more fundamental and takes precedence over the "what", "how", and "where", questions. It doesn't only cover the nature of things but why they are as they exist. As such, hypermodernity has therefore contributed to this drift away from the "why" questions as people now make choices neither asking why, (what is involved) nor thinking of the consequences. The quest for explanations are replaced with instructions and guidelines. Questions in request for some substances are replaced with quantitative statements. Wisdom actually requires real answers to real questions of life.

Obviously, what normally motivates people to engage in the study of philosophy is not mostly the answers it provides or the arguments involved, but whether or not the arguments are good and the answers are true. Philosophical questions tend to arise in almost every discipline which is the reason why philosophy also encompasses many areas like Philosophy of Law, Feminism, Religion, Science, Mind, Literature, Arts, History, Language, and Political Philosophy etc. Philosophy is so great in that it solidifies its global impact and relevance. It is not particular to any culture, locality, or country, but performs its function everywhere devoid of limitations as rationality is imbued in every man of any culture.

CONCLUSION

How can philosophy be seen as important in a world that has been torn apart by consumerism, where no one thinks again and asks why things are the way they are? This paper has to some extent been able to prove that philosophy is still the mother and queen of all the sciences, relevant and a challenge to future scientists. It was Stephen Law who in his article titled "Scientism, the limits of Science, and Religion", noted that science lacks the capacity to delve into moral questions. And philosophical questions are for the most part conceptual rather than scientific or empirical and the methods of philosophy are broadly speaking, conceptual rather than scientific or empirical¹¹.

Therefore, to argue that philosophy is a fruitless venture or irrelevant because it pursues another course different from that of science which aligns itself with technology in the production of artifacts or things for the betterment of man is pointless. Philosophy deals with concepts and like the bulldozer, continues to build and pave the way for other disciplines to ride on, and still stands erect.

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