Relevance of Philosophy to Any Discipline

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Abstract: **The quest for the utility or futility of Philosophy is a fundamental concern on the general relevance of Philosophy especially in a world that currently progresses on the provisions of post-modernity. The advancements of science and technology, the progress and achievements of some disciplines within the fields of humanities all tend to engender relative indifference to Philosophy which is sometimes considered abstract, speculative and as a career, non-professional and less lucrative.This paper attempts to establish the efficacy of Philosophy by drawing its significance to any discipline using the tools of Phenomenology and Critical analysis. The paper argues that the value of philosophy to any field is partly factored on its receptiveness and appreciation in the benefitting discipline. The paper finds that Philosophy mostly provides the fundamental principles that underpin various disciplines and continues to play often indispensable roles in various academic and practical fields of human endeavor.In the field of Law, Jurisprudence is essential for formulation of legal theories. In the field of Education, Philosophy is crucial in the areas of pedagogy, educational foundations, management and policies. Ethics is relevant to all facets of life. Within its own academic field, there is philosophy of virtually all disciplines which questions fundamental assumptions of such disciplines. Thus, Philosophy's relevance remains ineluctable.**

Keywords: **Philosophy, Relevance, Discipline**

I. INTRODUCTION

Philosophy as an academic discipline is one that is filled with a lot of misconceptions which has mislead many into thinking that it does not have any relevance to other fields of study or in the contemporary world. Most people are of the opinion that Philosophy is abstract and has no practical value and that philosophers are dreamers who speculate about things that are beyond human comprehension. They maintain that majoring in philosophy is a waste of time or that one cannot make a good living from it. Philosophers were seen as those who have nothing to offer practically. They were seen as those who isolate themselves from the rest of the world. Often times they were regarded as people with mystical and extraordinary powers and do not believe in God. There have been cases where students of other disciplines make fun of students of philosophy for having chosen philosophy as their course of study. Philosophy students continuously wonder about the relevance of their choice of study, how philosophy would help them solve day to day problems, as well as the value of a philosophy degree. All these questions arise because people are ignorant of the importance of philosophy. The importance of philosophy is self-evident and could be seen in all other disciplines by tracing their origins. It is true that many philosophical questions are esoteric, for example, some philosophers are more concerned with abstract objects and

wonder if they would exist if there were no human mind to perceive them. Numbers and God are abstract entities and are important in the domains of mathematics and religion. Does that make the two disciplines irrelevant? The fact remains that although many philosophical questions are abstract, this does not imply that philosophy has no value.

This work is divided into three parts. It begins with understanding philosophy which aims at explaining the concept of philosophy in other to disabuse the mind of what philosophy is not and correct the misconceptions of philosophy.Secondly it focuses on the relationship between philosophy and other disciplines. Finally, it discusses the relevance of philosophy to other disciplines.

II. UNDERSTANDING PHILOSOPHY

The concept of philosophy has received diverse views from various philosophers and scholars; this is owed to the fact that philosophy does not have a general acceptable definition. "An attempt to define philosophy is strikingly a philosophical question" (Obi,2016,). That is to say that an attempt to define the concept of philosophy has itself posed a philosophical problem (Ojong,1995,p.1). In other to avoid this problem, most philosophers and scholars resort to tracing the origin of the concept.

For a proper understanding of the term philosophy either as a subject or an academic field, there is need to go back to its etymology. Etymologically, philosophy is derived from two Greek words, *Philia* and *Sophia* which means Love and Wisdom respectively, hence the literal meaning of philosophy, 'Love of wisdom'. Love in this context means to have a strong affection for something and wisdom means the ability to apply relevant knowledge in an insightful way, especially to different situations. Therefore, philosophy as the love of wisdom means the strong desire for humans to possess knowledge and apply it correctly to different situations. Traditionally, philosophy is the scientific study of beings in their ultimate causes, reasons and principles through the aid of human reason. In other words it is the study of all things that exists, be it material (stone, cloud, chair human person etc.) or immaterial (God, soul, spirit) with the aim of questioning and understanding its origin and reason for existence. Philosophy is the systematic and critical study of the fundamental principle of existence. It asks fundamental questions about reality, existence, value, knowledge etc.

Basically, philosophy started from human curiosity and inquisitiveness for a general understanding of reality by critically subjecting everything to rigorous scrutiny. In concordance, Stumph (1975) posits that Philosophy began

when human curiosity and wonder caused them to ask the questions, "what are things really like?" and "how can we explain the process of change?"(p.3). It studies general and fundamental problems, such as those connected with existence, knowledge, values, reason, mind and language (Okereke & Iloanya, 2011, p.3).

III. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND OTHER DISCIPLINES

Philosophy as a field of study is regarded as one of the oldest disciplines. According to Egbeke (1996) It studies the "generality of existence from its most profound essence" (P.164) Simply put, Anything in the realm of study was a type of philosophy that is to say, it concerns itself with literally everything be it art or science. As the oldest discipline, it housed all other disciplines, as time went by, different fields of study developed and emerged into distinct field of study until nothing much was left that could be categorized into other discipline. Despite their distinctiveness, philosophy still plays enormous influence on them. For instance, in science, there is Philosophy of science, in education there is philosophy of education, in law there is philosophy of law. Umeh(2016) rightly put:Philosophy as a critical discipline also delves into other disciplines with a view to investigate their nature and foundations. Hence philosophy is subdivided into several other branches, according to the specific objects of its inquiry. We have philosophy of mathematics, the philosophy of law, the philosophy of religion, the philosophy of arts, the philosophy of science, political philosophy, philosophy of mind…each of them is either an aspect of major branches or a combination of some aspect of any branches of philosophy especially metaphysics and epistemology.(p.15)

Philosophy permeates in virtually all the disciplines because philosophy deals with fundamental knowledge and it involves intellectual activity and as such uses its philosophical apparatus to investigate the origin, source and validity of the self-acclaimed disciplines. Basically, philosophy as a discipline asks questions about everything that there is to ask.

Philosophy is regarded as the mother of all other disciplines because it gave birth to every other discipline and the relationship that exists between philosophy and other disciplines is the same as the relationship between a mother and her children and it continues to play the mother role by questioning their fundamental assumptions, fine-tuning their basic principles and guiding their activities.(Obi, 2016). Philosophy serves other discipline because it provides the base from which other discipline emanated. It is regarded as the science of all sciences and mother of all arts.

IV. RELEVANCE OF PHILOSOPHY TO OTHER DISCIPLINES

Philosophy is a second order discipline that actually undergirds all other disciplines. To buttress this point, Obi (2016) has this to say:

The second order here presupposes a first order; as a second order philosophy comes in to constructively question the first order thereby aiming at the ideal ways of improving the first order. The first order here could be politics, religion, science, labour, money, human reasoning etc. for instance; philosophy coming in to politics is to consider the ideal way of structuring the human society i.e. the ideal system of governance such as Democracy, Oligarchy, Communism, Ujammaism, etc was propounded by different philosophers. (p.3)

The relevance of philosophy to other disciplines are as follows:

V. PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOLOGY

In other to appreciate the Role of philosophy on Psychology, there is need for us to take a brief look at the history of Psychology. The history of Psychology as the scientific study of behaviour and mental processes dates back to the ancient Greeks. The earliest origin of psychology are in the writings of Greek philosophers, particularly, the writing of Aristotle. He was interested in the nature of life itself and dissected plants and animals to see how their origin sustained life. He used the term Psyche (mind) to refer to the essence of life. Psychology was a branch of philosophy until 1879, when Wilhelm Wundt, a German philosopher established the first laboratory within the Philosophy Department at the University of Liepzig dedicated exclusively to psychological research with the goal of applying the empirical methods of natural science to Philosophical problems. In light of the foregoing, Psychology arises out of philosophy with the aim of including the empirical method when examining questions posed by philosophy. In other words, philosophy plays a vital role in psychology by providing it with various topics of study for examples; Sensation, Perception, Intelligence and Memory.

Philosophers like Aristotle and Plato worked together and played an influential role in trying to understand the human mind. They maintained that observing behaviour should be the main aim of study. This gave rise to observation as one of the methods employed in psychology till date. Plato's distinctive features of the soul as having three parts; Desiring part, spirited part and the rational part also formed the foundation of Sigmund Freud's structural model of the mind as comprising three parts; id, ego and superego. Hobbesian idea of associationism was later adopted in psychology and it gave rise to social psychology. John Locke, the British Philosopher argued that the mind at birth is tabula rasa meaning that the mind at birth is a clean slate arguing that our knowledge comes from experience; his idea was adopted by John B. Watson to form his behavioural theory in psychology, essentialists and existentialists philosophers gave rise to Humanistic Psychology, William James' study of the mind as a whole entity, gave rise to Gestalt school. In light of the foregoing, Philosophy paved the way for different schools of thought that emerged in Psychology.

VI. PHILOSOPHY AND LAW

Interpretation is a tricky exercise as it is subjective in nature. Everyone interprets a text or an object based on their subjective understanding of the given text. However, interpretation is an important activity of scholars in almost all human disciplines as it involves understanding the meaning of verbal and written text. The questions, "How do you interpret something? What makes your interpretation better than the other and how can we argue about that in a scientific way?" are investigated by hermeneutics. "Hermeneutics is defined as the art of interpretation"(Nweke, 2016, p.19).Literally, "the term means to express, to interpret, to translate, to explain and to make intelligible"(Okereke&Iloanya 2011,p. 70). In law, hermeneutics is applied in law and it is used in the interpretation of legal matters. Legal hermeneutics is rooted in philosophical hermeneutics and its subject matter is the understanding of the nature of legal matter. It focuses on how to interpret a given text and also questions what it means to interpret texts. It asks the following questions: how do we decide what a given law means? Who makes that decision? What are the criteria that was used in making that decision? How efficient was the criteria? On what basis can one meaning of a given law be justifiably prioritized over another? These and many more are questions that hermeneutics using its criticality aims at interpreting.

Philosophy plays an important role in the formulation of legal theories. Leiter & Sevel (2016) argued that philosophy examines the nature of law especially in relation to human values, attitudes, norms, practices and political communities. Aristotliansyllogism when applied during argument help in the construction of valid argument. Logic is also employed by lawyers, it equips them with the ability to read and understand text, helps in the construction of sound argument and avoidance of fallacy.

Ethical principles direct and govern legal actions .The principle based approachto ethics combine elements of both utilitarian and deontological theories for specific action guide for legal practice. Ethics provides law with principles that will guarantee its strong foundation. The prescriptive nature of ethics deals with the application of moral principles and values to legal profession. Legal ethics is thought in law school to equip law students with skills on conflict resolution and lawyer-client relationship.

VII. PHILOSOPHY AND EDUCATION

Philosophy and education are two sides of the same coin as they play a complimentary role. Philosophy is theory while education is the practical. Philosophy provides education with the theoretical framework needed in the classroom. According to Smeyers,(2018) "regarded as one of the most important figures in educational theory is Jean-Jacques Rousseau's influence on modern philosophy through exploring his fundamental shift to individual education by discussing the problems of power in educational relationships, paternalism and individualization."(p.12). Philosophy is the study of the existence and the pursuit of knowledge, education is the pursuit of knowledge, therefore philosophy is the study of existence and education. In education, philosophy uses its tool of metaphysics, epistemology, and logic to address questions about pedagogy, education policy, curriculum, as well as educational theory and practice. It examines the definitions, goals, chains of meaning used in education by teachers or administrators of policymakers. It studies what constitutes upbringing in education, the nature of the learner, role of the teacher in influencing learning and method used by teachers in teaching processes. It also questions why a learner cannot process what was thought and the factors involved in the learning processes.

In addition, Philosophy is the study of the realities and the pursuit of knowledge education is a pursuit of knowledge. Philosophy is Wisdom and education transmits that wisdom from one generation to the other. Philosophy is in reality the theory of education. What this means is that, education is a dynamic side of philosophy or application and the fundamental principles of philosophy. Philosophy formulates the method adopted in educational field.

VIII. PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE

What is science? The meaning or definition of science has plagued scientist philosophers for millennia. The meaning or definition of science is one that requires philosophical investigation. Science is conceived as empirical, objective and rational discipline that builds and organizes knowledge (Ndianefoo, 2016). Science is a human investigative endeavour whose object is the natural world and natural phenomena. In other words science tries to give causal explanation to both natural and man-made events. However, there are some natural and man-made events that science cannot provide causal explanation for and therefore rely on philosophy to provide their explanation. In some cases, philosophy provides science with theoretical knowledge for causal explanations. Scientists try to understand explain or predict cultural natural phenomenon through development of theories and then draw conclusions by providing empirical data. The empirical nature of science is rooted in the empiricism school of thoughts in philosophy which emphasizes that knowledge comes from experience."Philosophy of science establishes the criteria for a valid scientific knowledge" (Mmaduabuchi, 2018, p.1).

Science solves some substantive world problems for instance; it gives us technology, things that we can touch, see and use, examples vaccines and painkillers. While Philosophy may seem not to provide something tangible, it is however responsible for the reasoning and thoughts behind the creation of those tangible objects for instance, Albert Einstein's philosophical thought experiments made Cassini possible. Aristotle's logic is the basis for computer science, which gave us laptops and smartphones. Rene Descartes works on the mind-body problem set the stage for the emergence of neuropsychology and therefore brain-imagining technology.

Philosophy has always been quietly at work in the background of science.

Philosophy explores what science is , how science works , the logic used in building up scientific knowledge, how much evidence and what kind of evidence are needed in other for a hypotheses to be accepted. The field of science has gained so much from philosophy. Epistemology as a branch of philosophy studies knowledge, origin, and sources of scientific knowledge. Empiricism emphasizes the importance of practicability. Falsificationism opined by Karl Popper is also employed in the sciences as a verification criterion. In the light of this, Science, according to many scientists, is purely objective, and anyone who challenges that view must be misguided. A person is not deemed to be objective if she approaches her research with a set of background assumptions.

IX. PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

Religion has been a central focus of human concern but in large parts of the developed world it has been reduced to near irrelevance by the most powerful force of our age, Science. Basically, human being by nature is a religious being. Man has always wondered about his history, origin and origin of the world. Man has constantly searched for the explanation of the natural phenomenon. The inquisitive nature of man caused him to assume that there must be something higher than him that is responsible for his creation and creation of the world. As Stumph says:

The most persistent question provoking the discussion about the existence of God concerns the origin of things – of human life and of the physical universe. God, in this context, is therefore thought of as the origin of all beings. Other attributes are attached to the concept of God by some, as for example that God is a personal being, all good, and purposeful. That such supreme exists, it is thought not only provides an explanation of the origin of all things but also illuminates the purpose of human existence (p.659)

Consequent on the above,Alawa(2015) maintained that "basic question of philosophy of religion grow out of intensive, intellectual scrutiny of living religions" (p.40).It is now the duty of Philosophy to enquire in to this belief by analyzing and evaluating these claims.Religion as an academic field focuses on the study of religious beliefs, behaviors, and religious institutions. Religion entails a conscious relationship between man and a higher power. Philosophy plays a vital role in religion in the sense that it employs philosophical methods to analyze critically the concept of religion. However it should be noted that philosophy does not aim at destroying religious practices, nor does it tend to defending religion or theological positions, rather, it aims at making sense out of it by critically scrutinizing it with a critical mind.

It has been widely recognized by philosophers overtime that as a discipline characterized by asking questions and wondering, Philosophy is inevitably concerned with the question of religion and religious practices (Oha, 2016). Consequently, philosophy questions the existence of God by asking these questions:

- Does God really exist?
- If he does, how can you prove his existence and if he does not, how can you prove his non-existence?

The existence of God is one of the controversial issues in science and philosophy and as such philosophers have devised arguments against and for the existence of God.Philosophy of Religion is rational thoughts about religious issues and concerns without a presumption of the existence of a deity or reliance on acts of faith. This does not mean however that Philosophy attempts to disprove Religious beliefs. It reveals that Religious beliefs are beliefs and not empirical claims.

X. CONCLUSION

The profound statement posed by scientists that philosophy is dead and irrelevant is profoundly wrong and it only demonstrate they are unaware of the ineluctable role of philosophy in the society and on the individual life. The fact that philosophy undergirds the other disciplines evidently proves it relevance. Philosophy is a human enterprise and as such it interrelates with other field providing them with topic of discourse. In legal practice, the skills of critical reasoning and rigorous analysis are needed for proper administration of justice. In the field of medicine, ethical principles of beneficence, autonomy, non-maleficence and justice are employed to resolve conflicts or dilemma that may arise in medical profession. In the educational field, philosophy provides theoretical framework that facilitates learning processes. In religion, philosophy advances question that other field are scared to ask. In scientific field, philosophy establishes the criteria for the validity of scientific knowledge and in the field of psychology, Aristotle's Idea of the Psyche gave rise to psychology.

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