

The Demolition Exercise in the Cartesian Methodic Doubt and Husserlean Phenomenological Epoche: A Metaphysical Interpretation

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Abstract

The search for knowledge that is true and certain has been fervent from time immemorial. Since it is the nature of man to know, to cogitate and to understand, it becomes imperative to set out the conditions under which one can properly say that this is the foundation of knowledge, this is the route to knowledge, this is knowledge per se, and this is how we 'ought' to benefit from knowledge. This paper therefore seeks to periscope knowledge in the light of Descartes methodic Doubt and Husserl's phenomenological Epoche. It is important to point out that both Descartes and Husserl were involved in a demolition exercise of previously acquired knowledge in order to establish a firm foundation for certain true, indubitable knowledge. I shall expose their views and hermeneutically subject them to serious metaphysical lashing in the light of a better interpretation of human cognition comprehended within a metaphysical frame-work. It is pertinent to observe that the problem of skepticism arises from the method of science and not from the structure of reality. For knowledge to be knowledge in strictu sensu, it must be in line with the structure of reality and its ultimate support.

Introduction

The primary and distinctive moment in which man fulfills himself preciously as man is in his cognition. This fulfillment, however, is very general and has little precision, precisely because immediately it is attained there comes some series of question such as: What is cognition/knowledge? How do we arrive at a satisfactory definition of knowledge? How do we determine what sorts of propositions can be known to be true and how do we explain how these propositions can be known to be true? [Krapiec, 1992:119].

However, there is extensive literature on this question, which is connected with different philosophical trends which propose, in different ways, the solution of the problem of the possibility of man's intellectual knowledge. These propositions can be divided, in a most general way, into three groups:

- i. A system of Skepticism doubting the possibility of knowledge.
- ii. A system of innate ideas or *a priori* categories making valid knowledge possible,
- iii. A system of Empiricism and, connected with it, a concept of concrete abstraction.

Each of these possible solutions has series of separate formulations and attempts toward its resolution. This paper attempts to periscope knowledge within the context of Descartes' methodic Doubt and Husserl's phenomenological epoche. The intended goal is to show how vacuous their skeptical foundations of cognition are by hermeneutically subjecting their methodological orientations to critical analysis in the light of classical epistemological and realistic theory of being.

Russell, [1980:1] the British analytic philosopher, in his examination of the possibility of knowledge states: "is there any knowledge in the world which is so certain that no reasonable man can doubt it?" This question, which at first sight might not seem difficult, is really one of the most difficult that can be asked. He went on to assert:

When we have realized the obstacles in the way of a straightforward and confident answer, we shall be well launched on the study of philosophy for philosophy is merely the attempt to answer such ultimate questions, not carelessly and dogmatically, as we do in ordinary life and even in the sciences, but critically, after exploring all that makes such questions puzzling, and after realizing all the vagueness and confusion that underlie our ordinary ideas (1980:1)

Russell's skepticism about certainty in knowledge is not something totally new. The ancient Greek philosopher, Gorgias of Leontini had hitherto insisted that, "Nothing is, if anything were, it could not be known; even if everything is known, the knowledge could not be communicated, every sign is different from the thing signified; e.g. how could we impart knowledge of colors by word, since the ear hears tones not colors, and how can the same representation of being be in the two persons at once, since they are different from one another? [Copleston, 1985:93-94].

The reason for this arises from the fact that in daily life, we assume as certain many things which, on a closer scrutiny, are found to be full of apparent contradictions that only a great amount of thought enables us to know what it is that we really may believe. Thus doubt or skepticism becomes apriori to certain knowledge.

Now, "something should be unavailable to understanding may come about for two reasons, as Aristotle said [Meta.11:1], either because the things themselves are unknowable or because we lack the intellectual ability". He goes further to explain:

[1]. Things themselves may be unknowable to us because they are singular and contingent things far from our senses, like the words of a man who is distant, they may be known to one man, but unknowable to others. But, since in human Society we ought to deal with others as we do with ourselves, we should be able to be as sure of somebody else's knowledge as we are of our own. So it is that human Society requires that one man have faith in the word of another. [Cicero, De officiis: 12]. Consequently, Lies are always offensive because they lessen the faith that is needed in human Society.

[2]. But, things may not be directly knowable because of some defect on our part. Such is the case with divine and necessary things which in themselves are most knowable. It is however imperative for us [because it is our nature] to first of all know things less knowable in themselves, things that are effects, before we know causes which are more knowable in themselves because they are the source of the reality and therefore the knowability of the effects.

In the opinion of the great Polish philosopher Prof.Krapiec [1979:721];

Causes are prior to effects in reality or by nature, not necessarily in time, but causes are usually subsequent to effects in our knowledge. But, if we cannot know the most knowable things early in our education, we ought at least to have some notion of them. Now prior to our knowing them we can have a preliminary notion only by them.

This skeptical orientation to knowledge no doubt culminated in the epistemological demolition exercise that characterizes the "methodic Doubt" and the phenomenological epoche [bracketing].

DESCARTES METHODIC DOUBT

Descartes [1596-1650], the founder of modern philosopher, invented a method which may still be used with profit- the method of systematic doubt. In his most important two books 'Discourse on Method' [1637] and the 'Meditations' [1642], Descartes begins by explaining the method of "Cartesian Doubt", as it has come to be called.

In order to have a firm basis for his philosophy, he resolves to make himself doubt everything that he can manage to doubt. As he foresees that the process may take some time, he resolves, in the meanwhile, to regulate his conduct by commonly received rules; this will leave his mind unhampered by the possible consequences of his doubts in relation to practice.

In the 'Meditations', Descartes sets out to establish what it is possible to know. Consequently, his principal concern in the book is with epistemology, the theory of knowledge. Establishing the limits of knowledge was not a merely academic exercise; he believed that if he could eliminate errors in his thinking and discover sound principles for acquiring true beliefs then this would provide a bedrock on which the edifice of scientific understanding of the world and our place within it could be built.

Before he could begin the constructive stage of his work, Descartes believed that he needed, once in his lifetime, to rid himself of all his former beliefs since he was aware that many of them were false. He thought it sensible to rid himself of all his former beliefs in one go and then consider one by one prospective replacements for them rather than to attempt a piecemeal repair of his belief structure.

In a reply to a critic of his work he explained this approach by means of an analogy: [Warburton, 2010:46]: if you are worried about rotten apples in a barrel you be well advised to tip out all the apples and examine each one before you replace it in the barrel. Only if you are certain that the apple you are considering is sound should you put it back in the barrel, since a single rotten apple could contaminate all the others. This analogy explains his method of radical doubt, often known as the method of Cartesian Doubt ['Cartesian' being the adjective from 'Descartes'].

CARTESIAN DOUBT

The Method of Doubt involves treating all your former beliefs as if they were false. You should only believe something if you are absolutely certain that it is true: the slightest doubt about its truth should be sufficient to reject it. The fact that you can doubt it doesn't prove that it is false; it may well turn out to be true. However, the merest suspicion that it might be false is enough to render it unsuitable as a foundation for the edifice of knowledge that has to be built on indubitable knowledge. Obviously this method is not a practical one for day-to-day living, as Descartes himself recognized; he advocated it as a once in a lifetime exercise. The point of this method was that it might allow Descartes to discover some beliefs which were immune from doubt and which would thus serve as foundations for his reconstruction of knowledge on sound principles. At worst it would show him that everything could be doubted; that nothing was certain [2010:46].

THE EVIDENCE OF THE SENSES

In the first Meditation Descartes introduces this Method of Doubt and applies it rigorously to his former beliefs, beginning with those he has acquired through the five senses. His senses have sometimes deceived him. For instance, he has made mistakes about what he could see in the distance. On the principle that it is wise never to trust what has once deceived you, he resolves not to trust the evidence of his senses. But, despite sometimes being deceived about objects in the distance, surely he couldn't be deceived about some facts acquired through the senses, such as that he is sitting in front of a fire in a dressing gown holding a piece of paper?

Descartes' response to this is that, on the contrary, he might be mistaken, even about something so apparently certain as this. Since in the past he had dreamt that he was sitting by the fire when in fact he was lying in bed asleep, he can't be sure that he is not now dreaming. But even in dreams things such as heads, hands, eyes and so on appear, which must be likenesses of things in the real World. So surely we can be certain that these types of object exist. The existence of more abstract notions such as size, shape and extension [by which he means the quality of taking up space] seems even more certain. Whether you are asleep or awake, $2+3=5$ and a square never has more than four sides. These things do seem indeed certain [Descartes, 1985:120]. But Descartes shows all these to be only apparent certainties. To do so he uses the thought experiment of the evil demon.

By applying this method he gradually became convinced that the only existence of which he could be quite certain was his own. He imagined a deceitful demon, who presented unreal things to his senses in a perpetual phantasmagoria; it might be very improbable that such a demon existed, but still it was possible, and therefore doubt concerning things perceived by the senses was possible [Russell, 1980:8].

But doubt concerning his own existence was not possible, for if he did not exist, no demon could deceive him. If he doubted, he must exist; if he had any experiences whatever, he must exist. Thus his own existence was an absolute certainty to him. 'I think, therefore I am', he said [cogito, ergo sum]; and on the basis of this certainty he set to work to build up again the World of knowledge which his doubt had laid in ruins. By inventing the method of doubt, and by showing that subjective things are the most certain, Descartes performed a great service to philosophy says Russell [1980:8], and one which makes him useful to all students of the subject.

It is clear that Descartes made a lot of sense, he puts knowledge on a clear footing of indubitability, he destroys in order to build afresh and his Cartesian doubt remains a strong form of skepticism. Apart from the few merits above, Cartesianism as an epistemological pathway to knowledge and as a method of how to philosophize, is built on a faulty methodological foundation and as such is fraught with a lot of difficulties. We shall deal with this aspect later; suffice to say, however, that it is time to examine Husserl's phenomenological bracketing.

HUSSERL'S PHENOMENOLOGICAL EPOCHE

The popularity of phenomenology today is normally attributed to Edmund Husserl [1859-1938], who was a mathematician turned philosopher by his teacher-Franz Brentano [1838-1917]. Brentano was a descriptive psychologist. Under the influence of Brentano's descriptive psychology, Husserl developed phenomenology as a descriptive analysis of experience. Its aim is simply to analyze and describe experience exactly as it occurs without the prejudice of any prior assumption or presumption.

In the course of experience therefore, the phenomenologist performs what Husserl [Iroegbu, 1995:206] calls eidetic reduction on the object of experience. This means that he puts aside all existential and particularizing characteristics of the object of experience and focuses his attention on its essential features in order to grasp its essence, and only its essence. Hence Husserl describes phenomenology as an eidetic Science, that is, a Science concerned only with essences [Husserl, 1931:15].

Husserl maintains, especially in his IDEEN [1931:151], that only the phenomenological approach with its specific method of bracketing can give certitude to philosophical inquiry. Phenomenology is the guarantee to the scientificity of ontology. According to Iroegbu [1995:206], the above claim is quite attractive. No wonder why Heidegger was an adept of it in his philosophical youth. Who would not like to reach the solidity of philosophical and other sciences via the brand new expository method called phenomenology?

METHOD: PHILOSOPHICAL EPOCHE.

Like Descartes, Husserl believes that in order to attain true and certain knowledge, the philosopher should start from a presuppositionless position. Consequently, the initial and very important step in phenomenological investigation is what Husserl calls the 'phenomenological epoche' which consists in putting between brackets [in order words putting aside] all previous beliefs, assumptions, and presuppositions about the object of inquiry. This presupposition or accepted ideas about things includes one's idea about God, the World, Man and Society. It equally relates to the cognition one possesses about distinctions of things, and the relations between primary and secondary qualities. It involves all the information one has received about interior worlds and the external senses. The setting aside of these and of all other knowledge and prejudices [positive and negative] that one possesses already, is technically called by Husserl-philosophical or phenomenological epoche. Epoche is the shifting aside, veiling out or bracketing of whatever initial knowledge one has as this may adversely affect the unprejudiced

arrival at the truth of being []. All these must be resolutely set aside, and the investigator must focus his attention on the essence of the object as it reveals itself to pure experience. By a kind of intuitive 'seeing', the mind then grasps the essence exactly as it reveals itself to the investigator.

Phenomenology thus follows in the footsteps of Descartes' Methodic Doubt. Indeed, Husserl tells us that Descartes is the 'great patron of phenomenology'

No philosopher of the past has affected the sense of phenomenology as decisively as Rene Descartes..... Phenomenology must honor him as its genuine patriarch. It must be said explicitly that the study of Descartes' Meditations has influenced directly the formation of the developing phenomenology and given it its present form, to such an extent that phenomenology might almost be called a new 20th c Cartesianism [Omeregbe, 1992:98].

The phenomenologist must put aside all that he had previously known- and this includes even-the world itself, and make a fresh start without taking anything for granted. "We can no longer accept the reality of the world as a fact to be taken for granted...As radically meditating philosophers, we now have neither knowledge that is valid for us nor a world that exists for us. We can no longer say that the world is real" [].

Husserl's aim is the same as that of Descartes, and that is to start philosophy afresh, to give it a new beginning and reconstruct it after an initial demolition exercise. It is however pertinent here to draw attention to the similarities and points of differences between both methods.

Both Descartes and Husserl were mathematicians turned philosophers, and they both wanted clear and indisputably certain knowledge. For Descartes, the demolition exercise was the methodic Doubt, for Husserl it is the phenomenological epoche. Both are agreed on the following points: knowledge must start from the ego/transcendental/ or the self; both had the aim of starting philosophy afresh and finally, both agree that certainty and knowledge could only be attained from a presuppositionless position. They however differ on the following grounds: for Descartes, the ego is the first logical sequence, while for Husserl; it is the matrix of experience. While Husserl argues for total bracketing, Descartes on the other hand, was less ambitious. Descartes doubt was geared to certain knowledge in philosophy; while Husserl's bracketing was for modern science. Finally, Descartes was more epistemological in orientation; while Husserl was ontologically grounded.

Critically assessed, a presuppositionless position as advocated by Husserl is not possible. Knowledge is not a creation Ex-Nihilo; moreover philosophy does not fall from heaven. Every knowledge as well as philosophy is a product of culture. In fact, philosophy is partly a cultural response to a cultural problem. Our philosophizing therefore must be grounded on some basic assumptions and presuppositions. To talk therefore of a presuppositionless position as the basis of genuine knowledge is to talk nonsense. To predicate the foundation of knowledge on skepticism is methodologically wrong. Above all, skepticism arises, as we shall argue soon, from the method of science and not from the structure of reality.

HUMAN COGNITION AND THE STRUCTURE OF REALITY

In my earlier work [Ukagba, 2002:73], I argued that Aristotle always start his inquires by a methodological review of conflicting possibilities. He starts the Second Book of Metaphysics by making this observation: [Aristotle, 2004:1,021]

The investigation of the truth is one way hard in another, easy. An indication of this is found in the fact that none is able to attain the truth adequately, while on the other hand, we do not collectively fail, but everyone says something true about the nature of things and while individually we contribute little or nothing to the truth, by the union of all a considerable amount is amassed. It is just that we should be grateful, not only to those with whose views we may agree, but also to those who have expressed more superficial views, for those also contributed something by developing before us the power of thought.

The diversity of approaches to philosophy, philosophical styles and methods had led to a situation in which today, more than ever before, philosophical discussions gain a wide currency. Moreover, if we add to this, the problem of advance in philosophy which has long troubled many thinkers and the current increase of interest in Met sciences, it will become obvious that the way of acquiring knowledge and generally of practicing philosophy has become the primary problem for every philosopher [Kaminski,1980:7]. There is no doubting the fact that all types of methods of the most recent philosophy which sets before itself maximalist task can be reduced to three groups:

- a) Scientific methods

- b) Phenomenological/Existential methods
- c) Peripatetic methods.

1 Scientific Methods

The first of these methods of philosophy makes reference to the methods of the natural sciences and the humanities championed by the Cartesian philosophy in a direct, positive and essential way. They came into existence in consequence of an enormous admiration for X- the achievements of the sciences- and epistemological monism which assumes not only one type of rational knowledge and one method, namely the scientific one is possible. Philosophies practiced in this style generalize hypothetically the results of particular disciplines, profoundly interpret the facts accepted in these disciplines generally or search for synthesis which crown scientific cognition.

This method followed the path of trying, as it were, to change philosophy by imparting to it something of the nature of empirical sciences, by fashioning it in such a way as to produce certain generally acceptable results. This tendency was rampant among such modern thinkers as Descartes, Hume, Leibniz and Kant. In contemporary times, it was once again taken up by Bertrand Russell who tried to outline a new methodology for what he called "Scientific Philosophy" [Russell, 1986:95].

This method equally attempts to shift Philosophy towards production of practical results. Rene Descartes, goaded by the scientific trend of his time, opined that the place of pristine theoretical philosophy should be taken by a new practical philosophy, which will facilitate a mastery of nature. The American pragmatist, John Dewey, reminds all philosophers that all human knowledge is but an instrument, the usefulness of which is dependent on their outcome. The central task of philosophy, for him, is not to "understand the World, but to dominate it [Pieper, 1992:29-30]. This statement calls to mind Marx's assertion that "philosophers have theorized about the World but that the point is to change it [Oguejiofor, 1998: xviii].

Despite valuable results for Meta-sciences [content integration and unification of science and a considerable influence on their development]; they do not reach an irrefutable answer to the question, which persistently appear before man. Why and what for do man and the World exist if they do not have to exist and if life so often seems meaningless?

2) Phenomenological cum Existential Methods

Phenomenological/Existential methods [Husserl, Sartre, Heidegger, and Camus] guarantee the autonomy of philosophy in relation to scientific cognition and stress the problem centered on human matters. They seem to suit the mentality of contemporary man because at the point of departure of their investigations they take the contents of man's consciousness, which they reflect directly. Sometimes they see the problem of man and the World fixed in sign systems which they subject to an insightful and many-sided interpretation/hermeneutics/. At the same time consciousness, as well as language are treated intentionally, that is, as presenting something beyond themselves. In this way an attempt is made to reach a certain reality, to explain human experiences, and to point to various conditions of what we are conscious of.

But can even a comprehensive and profound analysis of the contents of our consciousness or an insightful interpretation of its linguistic expression furnish us with ontically ultimate and methodologically irrefutable understanding of the whole reality itself? Do they assure the realism and universality /transcendentality/ of our cognition and exclude all subjectivism?

3) Peripatetic Methods

And finally peripatetic methods, making reference to Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, attempt to give a rational autonomous philosophy which is practiced not meta-objectively but radically realistically. Beginning with sensual-intellectual direct contact with reality in general-existential aspect, its philosophy is explained ultimately in the ontic order and methodologically irrefutably, analogous and transcendental cognition is arrived at. The methods of philosophy belonging to this group fall into three different varieties: namely (a) Intuitive-deductive methods/conservative Thomism/, (b) Intuitive-reductive /specifying Thomas/ and (c) Reflexive-interpretative/Assimilating Thomism/ [Maritain, 1963:7].

The first of these peripatetic traditions referred to here consist in the fact that by means of intellectual intuition the most general principles are discovered and the remaining philosophical assertions are deduced from them. Intuitive-reductive method (a traditional conception is perfected on the basis of history of Philosophy and general methodology of sciences) can be reduced to the fact that reality conceived of generally and in the existential aspect is explained theoretically, by means of reductive thinking. Finally, reflexive-interpretative methods (a traditional conception is here connected with, and transformed by phenomenological-existential method), constitute different varieties of peripatetic way of philosophizing assimilating the phenomenological, existential or hermeneutic style of practicing philosophy.

Of these three major methods of philosophizing, the peripatetic method [Krapiec, 1991:319], seems to be the clearest attempt to give specific answers to the questions `what is knowledge? And what is the best way to philosophize by linking tradition with modernity. It derives its conception, so to say, mainly from Thomas Aquinas conception of Philosophy [on the other hand, it makes reference to the Thomist tradition critically and

selectively] and from the tendency to formulate this conception on the basis of conclusion from the history of Philosophy as a whole and taking into account the generally accepted directive of science which assume the pluralism of the types of specialized rational knowledge.

The conception of knowledge and how to do philosophy presented under the peripatetic has been reformulated mainly thanks to historical and speculative research of J.Maritain and E.Gilson and completed by their continuators, primarily M.A.Krapiec. However, neither the authority of Thomas Aquinas nor any of his interpreters decide about the adoption of this conception but the reasons which spring from the epistemological-methodological analysis of both the cognitive value of the proposed metaphysics, and especially its function in the foundations of science and World-views, as well as the philosophical tradition as a whole.

It seems that theory of being fulfils the contemporary demand for Philosophy, which is autonomous, but in relation to faith [it rejects the apologetic function with regard to faith and defends rationalism [Copleston, 1975:65] and philosophy. It also fulfils the postulated maximalist with regard to cognition of the sciences and the humanities (it rejects scientific with regard to the tasks of Philosophy). Although the maximalist philosophy of the first half of the 20th century boasts of many achievements as far as ordering and specifying is concerned, it does not satisfy an inquisitive thinker because it does not make a significant contribution to the solution of problems which constitute the mystery of being in general and human being in particular.

Thus, such philosophical investigations seem necessary which do not restrict their cognitive aims with regards to cognitive means permissible in particular disciplines, but make use of the best means that they may have at their disposal for the realization of maximalist cognitive tasks dictated by life itself [Kaminski, 1980:8].

This peripatetic way of philosophizing provisionally assumes the rational character of the World and the possibility of its ultimate theoretical explanation. That is why it is opposed to irrationalism and praxis, which are not infrequently, shared by philosophers today, seeing in these tendencies, an unjustified renunciation of the necessary values of philosophical thinking. It also clearly disagrees with the present vogue for Philosophy practiced, if not exclusively then, predominantly in a met-objective form, either as a reflection on the consciousness/Descartes/, transcendental ego/Husserl/, or analysis and interpretation of language/Russell/. It does not hold that the subject and object of cognition constitute a single hermeneutic whole, nor that objective cognition is arrived at through subjectivity. It wants to be a way of philosophizing which principally makes use of the method of objective cognition and so superbly investigates and explains the objective reality grasped directly because only in this way it avoids the pitfalls of idealism, subjectivism and relativism, and acquires the truly transcendental knowledge. This is not to say that it totally rejects the meta-objective cognition. It only does not make self-consciousness the only "Archimedes point" of philosophizing [Czezowski, 1958:197].

Our knowledge is not primarily self-knowledge. We cognize ourselves by simply living in the world. Thus, reflection is found essentially in meta-philosophy. This is where the history of Philosophy should be extensively used. The analysis and interpretations of language, which is a tool in cognition, should constitute the preliminary stage of philosophical investigations, whilst reflection should accompany them, complementing them particularly in connection with the cognition of man and his activity. In short, Krapiec insists [1991:320] that "the method of peripatetic does not care either for the faithfulness to the existentialist Thomism nor to some preferences of contemporary thinkers, but tries to be faithful primarily to its natural object-the existing reality".

The explanation of reality conceived of in this way proceeds with the help of a specific set of thought operations, which are generally known from other types of knowledge. However, this set considered as a whole is peculiar. It is characterized primarily by its constant sensible intellectual contact with objective reality as well as by intellectualism and reductiveness of thinking. Intellectualism manifests itself mainly in the process of existential states of things, that is, in arriving at the fundamental thesis, which grasps reality in the general existential aspect. On the other hand, reductiveness is characteristic of the action of discursive presentation of the ultimate (in the order of being) and necessary ontic reasons of reality in the internal structure of being. Thanks to it, theory of being/metaphysics/ is knowledge, which is essentially different from formal disciplines (a priori and rational construction of tautologies arranged in a deductive system) and from the sciences and the humanities. In my different lectures on metaphysics and other write-ups at both local and international levels, I've insisted that "theory of being does not overlap with irrational contemplation or evaluative experiencing of important human affairs, or with reflective participating in existence [Ukagba, 2002:78].

Finally, peripatetic method does not replace all these types of cognition, nor does it want to subordinate them to itself, to be their programme. It is not so as is sometimes claimed, because philosophy concerns the essence of things and considers them as a whole, whereas the particular disciplines concern phenomena considered fragmentarily, but because it cognizes transcendently, and not categorically. It does not deal either with the qualitative quantitative or formal aspects of reality but, as no science does, with the general existential aspect. However, this aspect allows us to acquire knowledge, which is capable of rationally validating the deepest basis of the world-view and to strengthen the assumptions implicitly, accepted in particular disciplines. Thus, theory of being, having a separated formal object and its own cognitive tasks, can be replaced neither by

particular sciences nor generalizing synthesis of their results.

Evaluation

The orientation towards materialism and the present intoxication with the achievement of science in Nigeria of today often tends towards scientific philosophizing amongst most professional philosophers in our institutions of high learning. Modern philosophers/beginning with Descartes/ want to practice philosophy critically, and so they do not want to pass from things to their cognition, but they want to go from thoughts to things or to begin with analysis and reflection on the data of consciousness and to try to establish first the conditions of experience devoid of illusions in order to construct ontology afterwards. As I argued earlier on, skepticism arises from the method of science and not from the structure of reality. Basing the existence of reality on being experienced first is akin to placing theory of knowledge before metaphysics [the cart before the horse] of which Descartes has randomly been faulted. In my doctoral defense [Ukagba, 1993:185], I argued thus:

The scientific philosophizing falls into a `vicious circle`, for from the standpoint of the awareness, which considers merely the aspect of reality related to content, and thereby only the possible aspect, there is no passage from possibility to the ascertainment of reality itself/a posse ad esse non valet illatio/. It is not thought which is first in relation to reality. It is the other way round. Reality itself awakens our cognition, and that is why the primacy of being before cognition is absolute

Only being apprehended in our cognition is the sufficient reason for the acceptance of the whole rational order, which through first principles [such as identity, non-contradiction, the principle of the excluded middle and the reason of being], can justify a philosophical understanding of the world in rational cognition [Krapiec,1979:256].

However, the intensification of criticism in meta-objective philosophizing seems illusory because if one consistently rejects all dogmatic assumptions in the name of skepticism, the meta-objective philosophizing leads to idealism, which is confirmed by the history of philosophy. I believe, on the other hand, that realism can be defended only by means of the more or less obvious dogmatic assumptions. My reason being that in meta-objective philosophizing there is neither increase of criticism nor a decrease of dogmatism but criticism and dogmatism appear in different moments of philosophizing.

Thus on everyone of the great problems of philosophy, the peripatetic method when compared with the stance of phenomenological-existential cum scientific methods, appears as an eminence between two contrary errors. Jacques Maritain [1979:205] strongly argues thus:

The truth indeed is not to be found in a philosophical method which keeps the mean between contrary errors by its mediocrity and by falling below them, being built up by borrowing from both, balancing one against another and mingling them by arbitrary choices made without the light of a guiding principle/eclecticism/; it must be sought in a philosophy which keeps the mean between contrary errors by its superiority, dominating both, so that they appear as fragments fallen and severed from its unity. For it is clear that, if this philosophy be true, it must reveal in full what error sees only in part and distorted by a bias, and thus must judge and secure, by its own principles, and in the light of its own truth, whatever truth error contains though it cannot distinguish.

Conclusion

The historical development of philosophy started experiencing serious problems with the emergence of skeptical conceptual frame-work of analysis. The shift of confidence away from the possibility of direct insights into the World to insights into the mind of the knowing subject cum further insights into the logical structure of the language has set the intellectual ball of confusion rolling since the time of Descartes. Philosophy rightly understood is an attempt to understand reality in the light of human natural reason, and human reason has the capacity to penetrate the `Kpim`, core, essence or quiddity of reality without recourse to the kind of doubt that cannot be resolved. Equally, it is important to observe that human reason is capable of showing how we come by justification for what we believe and know [Grayling, 2001:59]. The epistemologization of reality should not be predicated on a skeptical foundation as skepticism arises not from the structure of reality, but from the method of science which is unfortunately man`s creation and his attempt to organize himself more orderly, systematically and coherently. If there is knowledge at all, it must be knowledge of being-an existing reality. The structure of this reality must therefore determine the way and manner of the cognoscibility of being. Insights into the mind of the knowing subject and equally insights into the logical structure of the language as fundamentum are false routes to human cognition.

Finally, my suggested approach [peripatetic method], here stands out as being beyond comparison with the other two mentioned above, because it alone bestows harmony and unity on human knowledge/both metaphysical and scientific/ and because in itself according to Jacques Maritain [1979:75], "it realizes a maximum of consistency in a maximum of complexity, and neglect of the least of its principles involves the most unexpected consequences, distorting our understanding of reality in innumerable directions".

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