

AN EXAMINATION OF THE METHODS OF PHILOSOPHY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

Every field of human endeavor has its ordered ways through which it carries out its systematic enquiry and study. Philosophy in its own right as an area of human discipline does not go about its business without certain rules by way of procedures. However, the question one may ask is how it is possible that philosophy is guided by certain methods, when it has no generally accepted definition, given the fact of the nature of the subject matter of its concern, which is reality in its entirety. Is it really possible to have any peculiar procedure of examining and studying reality called the method of philosophy distinct from the procedures used in other disciplines? In other words, are there methods that are distinct and sui generis to philosophy? How can these methods help human development in the society? In this work, our main contention is to examine how the philosophic methods can help human society in its quest for development. Africa for instance is a society where interminable attempts at development have been observed, it is therefore recommendable that a combination of the methods of philosophy as observed in this article can help human society especially African in the improvement of its conundrum of underdevelopment. We end by averring that Philosophy, mankind's greatest intellectual achievement is not being utilized enough as it is supposed to in order to help mankind in its developmental drive for excellence.

Introduction

Every field of human endeavor has its ordered ways through which it carries out its systematic enquiry and study. Philosophy in its own right as an area of human discipline does not go about its business without certain rules by way of procedures. However, the question one may ask is how it is possible that philosophy is guided by certain methods, when it has no generally accepted definition, given the fact

of the nature of the subject matter of its concern, which is reality in its entirety. Is it really possible to have any peculiar procedure of examining and studying reality called the method of philosophy distinct from the procedures used in other disciplines? In other words, are there methods that are distinct and sui generis to philosophy? In writing about philosophy and the idea of a method, A.C. Ewing as cited in C.O. Abakare, opines that: “defining one method of philosophy is dangerous because it unnecessarily limits the scope of philosophy by excluding those realities that are not amenable to the defined method.”¹

In a bid to do that in philosophy, philosophers have in no little measure developed and advanced different methods in philosophy. Philosophical method (or philosophical methodology) is the study of how to do philosophy. A common view among philosophers is that philosophy is distinguished by the ways that philosophers follow in addressing philosophical questions. An established, habitual, logical, or prescribed practice or systematic process of achieving certain ends with accuracy and efficiency, usually in an ordered sequence of fixed steps.

Thus, because of the nature of philosophical inquiry, there is not just one method that philosophers use to answer philosophical questions. To do the job of adequately studying the different manifestations of reality, philosophy has evolved a few methods; these methods include: the dialectic, analytic, hermeneutic, phenomenological, speculative, prescriptive, inductive and deductive methods, etc. In this work, our main contention is to examine how the philosophic methods can help human society in its quest for development. Africa for instance is a society where interminable attempts at development have been observed, it is therefore recommendable that a combination of the methods of philosophy as observed in this article can help

human society especially African in the improvement of its conundrum of underdevelopment.

Analytic Method

Analytic method is a style of philosophy that became dominant in the Western world at the beginning of the 20th Century. As a philosophical method, it is characterized by an emphasis on argumentative clarity, conceptual analysis and precision. As a historical development, analytic philosophy refers to certain developments in early 20th-century philosophy that were the historical antecedents of the current practice. Central figures in this historical development are Bertrand Russell, Wittgenstein, Moore, Frege, and the logical positivists. In its more specific sense, analytic philosophy is identified with specific philosophical traits (many of which are rejected by many contemporary analytic philosophers).

There is the logical-positivist principle that there are not any specifically philosophical facts and that the object of philosophy is the logical clarification of thoughts. This may be contrasted with the traditional fundamentalism, which considers philosophy to be a special science (i.e., the discipline of knowledge) that investigates the fundamental reasons and principles of everything.

There is also the principle that the logical clarification of thoughts can be achieved only by analysis of the logical form of philosophical proposition. The logical form of a proposition is a way of representing it (often using the formal grammar and symbolism of a logical system), to reduce it to simpler components if necessary, and to display its similarity with all other propositions of the same type. However, analytic philosophers disagree widely about the correct logical form of ordinary language. The analytic method focuses on words and meanings. To analyze is to separate something into its

component parts to find out what it is made up of. To analyze is to reduce complex concepts or ideas into smaller units. According to Abakare, for example, “News commentators ‘analyze’ a political speech to discover hidden implications not readily apparent to us listeners.”² The analytic philosopher attempts to breakdown such notions or concepts as ‘cause and effect’, ‘freewill and determinism’, ‘essence and existence’, ‘mind’, to assess the different connotations imbedded in them. He exposes possible inconsistencies that may arise when we misplace meanings. Philosophy in its analytic method cannot but expose or bring out inconsistencies in a system of thought. It simply involves detailed examination of language as a way of understanding problems which confront man. The philosophical analyst believes that at the root of several human experiences that sometimes escalate to unimaginable proportion, there is a grave misunderstanding of the contents of such experiences.

To be sure, the philosophical analyst uses the tools of logic to analyze statements or arguments in order to ascertain the validity of one’s position. In a broad sense, there are two ways of carrying out linguistic analysis in philosophy. These are: (1) Analysis of particular words or concepts in their own right, and (2) An enquiry into relations among words or simply the context in which they are used in statements or arguments

Dialectic Method

Dialectic or **dialectics** (Greek: *dialektikē*; related to dialogue), also known as the **dialectical method**, is at the base of a discourse between two or more people holding different points of view about a subject but wishing to establish the truth through reasoned arguments. Dialectic resembles debate, but the concept excludes subjective elements such as emotional appeal and the modern pejorative sense of rhetoric. Dialectic may be contrasted with the methodic doubt,

wherein one side of the conversation teaches the other. Dialectic is alternatively known as *minor logic*, as opposed to *major logic* or critique.³

This method of philosophy was developed by Socrates in 470-399 BC and advanced by Plato in *The Last Days of Socrates*, and it is also referred to as Socratic Method. He was driven with the conviction that the most reliable and surest way to attain indubitable knowledge of reality was to use the method of question and answer as he acted as a midwife among his contemporaries to deliver their innate knowledge and ideas. It is therefore, pertinent to note that this method presupposes innate ideas hence the business of a philosopher is to help people deliver their innate ideas and knowledge through the process of question and answer.

Within Hegelianism, the word *dialectic* has the specialized meaning of a contradiction between ideas that serves as the determining factor in their relationship. Dialectic comprises three stages of development: first, a thesis or statement of an idea, which gives rise to a second step, a reaction or antithesis that contradicts or negates the thesis, and third, the synthesis, a statement through which the differences between the two points are resolved. Dialectical materialism, a theory or set of theories produced mainly by Karl Marx and Fredrick Engel, adopted the Hegelian dialectic into arguments regarding traditional materialism. Dialectic tends to imply a *process* of evolution and so does not naturally fit within formal logic. This process is particularly marked in Hegelian dialectic and even more so in Marxist dialectic which may rely on the evolution of ideas over longer time periods in the real world; dialectical logic attempts to address this.

Hermeneutic Method

Etymologically speaking, hermeneutics is from the Greek word, *hermeneuo*, meaning “translate” or “interpret”. However, it has no certain and acceptable origin. It was however, launched into philosophy first in the classical work of the ancient philosopher, Aristotle (*Peri Hermeneias*) meaning, *On Interpretation*. D. Couzen-Hoy in the *Critical Circle*, argues that the term hermeneutics relates etymologically to Hermes, the mythological Greek deity whose role is that of a messenger of the gods⁴

Although, hermeneutics was originally conceived as the theory and method of interpreting the Bible, it later on came to include the study of ancient and classical cultures. However, in the wake of the Reformation in the Modern period, W. Dilthey, (1960) opines that new focus was brought to bear on Hermeneutics with its displacement of responsibility for interpreting the Bible. The new focus on hermeneutics occurred especially in Germany. Consequently, hermeneutics developed into a general theory of human understanding through the works of Friedrich Schleiermacher, Wilhelm Dilthey, Martin Heidegger, Hans-George Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, and Jacques Derrida.

Unlike in religious studies where hermeneutics refers to the study of the interpretation of religious texts; in philosophy, it denotes the study of theories and methods of the interpretation of all texts and systems of meaning. The hermeneutic principle entails that thought must be derived from language according to the same law which regulates the expression of thought in language, the process alone being inverted. Thus, language ought to conform to the code in which it was written. The writer of any text commonly uses the code of his day and of his own peculiar circumstances; he employs language in line with its peculiar usages and its grammatical rules. In the expression of his thought, he follows the sequence of logic, and his words are reflection

of both his mental, physical and social condition. Thus, for the interpreter to fully understand the writer, he must be guided by the author's language, trend of thought or the context as well as psychological and historical condition at the time of writing.

The process of understanding a text hermeneutically encapsulates the hermeneutic circle. It entails the idea that an understanding of a text as a whole could be achieved by reference to the individual parts, while the understanding of the individual parts by reference to each whole; hence it is a circle. This circular character of interpretation stresses the necessity of taking into consideration the cultural, historical and literary contexts of a text in order to derive its meaning.

Phenomenological Method

Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) was one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth Century. originator of the 'phenomenological method' for the analysis of physical and mental phenomena, with 'intentionality' at its center, and initiator of the 'phenomenological' movement of contemporary [human sciences](#). He became the great critic of what he sees as naive 'naturalism' in philosophy and psychology ('psychologism'), and of what he regards as the loss of orientation, certainty, and thereby of credibility of modern science. His appeal for 'going back to the things themselves,' and for overcoming the crisis of modern science by a foundation of all science and philosophy in a clearly understood 'life-world' inspired the work of a great number of philosophers, including Gadamer, Heidegger, Ingarden, Levinas, Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur, and Sartre. Husserl's impact on the social sciences was mainly indirect, through (1) revealing the deficiencies of a merely naturalistic approach in science, (2) supplying very detailed methods for the description of phenomena, relations and situations, and (3) stimulating applications of the phenomenological method in many

areas of social science, e.g., in [sociology](#) as brought into effect by Schütz.⁵

The idea of the reduction occupies a special place in phenomenological method. Reduction is the technical term that describes the phenomenological device which permits us to discover the experiential surge of the life world. The aim of the reduction is to re-achieve a direct and primal contact with the world as we experience it rather than as we conceptualize it. But the discovery of the pre-reflective life world through the technique of the reduction always transcends the life world: when we bracket lived experience we experience meaning. The method of reduction is meant to bring the aspects of meaning that belong to the phenomena of our life world into nearness. In particular, it aims at bringing into focus the uniqueness of the particular phenomenon to which we are oriented.

There exist many philosophical investigations and explications of the reduction that can make this topic complex and confusing. This is not surprising in view of the fact that the project of [phenomenology](#) can be understood in a variety of ways. Below several levels or dimensions of the reduction are distinguished for their eclectic value and methodological usefulness: wonder or [heuristic](#) reduction, openness or [hermeneutic](#) reduction, concreteness or experiential reduction, and universality in contingency or eidetic reduction. Each of these dimensions of the reduction needs to be practiced as if in concert. Yet it may be helpful to deal with them separately while keeping the integrity of the larger phenomenological project in view.

At the most basic level, the heuristic reduction consists of the attitude or mood of wonder in the face of the world. What does this mean? It implies an approach that can shatter the taken-for granted of our everyday reality. Wonder is the unwilling willingness to meet what is

utterly strange in what is most familiar. To wonder is to step back and let things speak to us, a radical passive receptivity to let the things of the world present themselves in their own terms. When we are struck with wonder we seem to have evaporated momentarily our present preoccupations. We are suddenly struck by the strangeness of this thing, this phenomenon. Perhaps it is strange to speak of wonder as a method. But if we understand method as *methods*, as path or way, then we may indeed consider wonder an important motive in [human science](#) inquiry. The way to knowledge and understanding begins in wonder. So methodologically the heuristic reduction requires discovering the miraculous moment of wonder; and in this moment a question may emerge that addresses us. The heuristic reduction involves the [awakening](#) of a profound sense of amazement at the mysteriousness of the belief in the world. This fundamental amazement may animate one's questioning of the meaning of the lived experience of the world. In terms of the particular research project in which one is engaged the heuristic reduction challenges the researcher to be receptive and awakened to a profound sense of wonder. But it also challenges the researcher to write in such a way that the reader of the phenomenological text is similarly stirred to the same sense of wondering attentiveness to the topic under investigation. Phenomenological inquiry continually edifies a wondering attitude of attentiveness.

At the level of the hermeneutic reduction, the [phenomenologist](#) needs to reflect on his or her own pre-understandings, frameworks, and biases regarding the psychological, political, and ideological motivation and the nature of the question. This is a search for genuine openness to engage in a conversational relation with the phenomenon. On the one hand, this means that one needs to practice a critical [self-awareness](#) with respect to the assumptions that prevent one from being as open as possible to the sense and significance of

the phenomenon. The researcher needs to forget as it were vested interests and pre-understandings. On the other hand, it means that one needs to realize that forgetting one's pre-understandings is not really possible and, therefore, these various assumptions and interests may need to be explicated so as to exorcise them in an attempt to let speak that what wishes to speak. Practically, the hermeneutic reduction consists of reflectively examining and turning over in one's textual labor the various pre-understandings that seem to impinge on the reflective gaze. This does not mean that one must hope to arrive at some pure vantage point, as if such a pure gaze were possible. But it requires that the various dimensions of lived meaning of the selected human experience are investigated for their different sources and layers of meaning, rather than being overlaid with a particular frame of meaning. Phenomenological inquiry is continually open to questioning assumptions and pre-understanding.

The experiential reduction requires that one avoids abstraction, theorizing, and generalization. Indeed, for any research project one must examine the available theories and discuss the body of knowledge about the topic. Theories need to be reviewed for how they inform (but fail) concreteness. Many theories contain some phenomenological material, or they are built on certain [intuitions](#) that presume phenomenological understandings. In the phenomenological reduction one needs to strip away the theoretical or scientific conceptions and thematizations that overlay the phenomenon one wishes to study, and that prevent one from seeing the phenomenon in a non abstracting manner. The way in which to bracket theoretical meaning is not to ignore it but to examine it for possibilities of extracting phenomenological [sensibilities](#). It is helpful to examine how the theories of conceptualizations gloss or hide the experiential reality upon which they ultimately must be based. Theories tend to explain phenomena that are not really

understood in a lived or concrete sense. So one must ask: how is this topic actually experienced? What are examples of possible incidents or events? Phenomenological inquiry is continually oriented to the beginning, to the concrete, to experience as lived.

The eidetic reduction is the most central to the phenomenological method, especially for those traditions that borrow from Husserl. The researcher asks: What makes this experience uniquely different from other related experiences? In the eidetic reduction one needs to see past or through the particularity of lived experience toward the essence that lies on the other side of the concreteness of lived meaning. The idea of phenomenological essence does not refer to some immutable universal or generalization about human nature of human life. Phenomenological inquiry is only concerned with possible human experiences – not with experiences that are presumed to be universal or shared by all humans irrespective of time, culture, gender, or other circumstance. In addition, phenomenological determination of meaning is allusively and ultimately always [indeterminate](#), always tentative, always incomplete, always inclined to question assumptions by returning again and again to lived experience itself, the beginnings of phenomenological inquiry. The eidetic reduction is partially accomplished by comparing the phenomenon with other related but different phenomena.

In the eidetic reduction, patterns of meaning or themes seem to emerge. These are not themes in the sense of theoretical or conceptual abstractions; they do not belong to existing theories, taxonomies, genres, paradigms, philosophies, or conceptual frameworks. Phenomenological themes are the working material for phenomenological writing. The eidetic reduction differs from concept analysis in that the reduction does not claim to clarify linguistically the boundaries of a phenomenon or how a concept is

being used in different contexts. Rather, the reduction attempts to offer intimations of meaningfulness. The eidetic reduction asks: Does this piece of text bring the experience into view? Does this phrase resonate with our pre-reflective sensibilities? Are these portrayals of lived meaning recognizable? Do they evoke something unique about this human experience? The eidetic reduction is not a simplification, fixation, or contraction of the world into a system of eidetic concepts – rather it is the exact opposite: the eidetic reduction makes the world appear as it precedes every cognitive construction: in its full ambiguity, [irreducibility](#), contingency, mystery, and ultimate [indeterminacy](#).

Speculative Method

The word speculative comes from the Latin word *speculari* meaning to spy out, to investigate, uncover, watch or observe. Speculation is a way of thinking systematically about everything that exists. It is an attempt to find coherence in the whole realm of thought and experience. Whatever knowledge we gain in this life, it is either practical or speculative/theoretical, depending on whether it is sought for useful ends or sought simply for its own sake. Philosophy is essentially speculative in nature and method because its objective is to know or understand. But this does not mean that philosophy is mere speculation – guess work, or unscientific forecast. It is speculative in a more profound sense. It is a method of seeking for knowledge specifically for the sake of knowledge. The method involves using thinking to see how all things are related and how they form a meaning; orderly whole. The question may arise as to why philosophers would want to do this? Why are they not content, like scientists, to study particular aspects of reality? The truth is that the human mind by its nature seeks to see things as a whole. It wishes to understand how all the different manifestations of reality is discovered, all come together to form a sort of a meaningful totality.

The method of speculation in application is an enquiry into the nature of order or wholeness applied into not just a particular reality or experience, but to all knowledge and all experiences seeing it as a whole.

Prescriptive Method of Philosophy

Prescriptive philosophy in its method, attempts to arrive at criteria or conditions which will guide our judgment of concepts and issues to establish criteria for evaluating them. Precisely put, prescriptive philosophy seeks to establish standards for assessing values, judging conduct and appraising arts. It examines what we mean by 'good' and 'bad', right and wrong, beautiful and ugly and so on. It asks such questions as whether these qualities are in things themselves or whether they are projections of our own minds. The prescriptive philosopher seeks to discover and to recommend principles for deciding what actions and qualities are most worthwhile and why they should be so. It involves "systematic, imaginatively constructing general standards or norms based on our synthesis of facts and beliefs which we feel may be of future assistance in deciding behavior"⁶

Prescriptive method of philosophizing often serves as hypothesis or guides on how to act in given situations and expressing its conclusions in terms such as ought, should, obligation and duty. Some ethical and religious philosophers employ this method in their philosophy.

Inductive and Deductive Reasoning

The philosophical method hinges on one's ability to make sound, reasoned arguments. After all, ideas about how mankind should live, behave and conduct business aren't worth much if they can't stand up to logical scrutiny. Ancient philosophers established two main types of reasoning to test the validity of their observations and construct rational arguments: inductive and deductive reasoning. Though

flawed, both inductive and deductive reasoning provide the basic framework for the kind of logical analysis that drives scientific research and discovery.

Inductive Reasoning

Inductive reasoning is a process by which a person makes a generalization based on specific, individual experiences. The process begins with observation. A person collects data through the five senses, and then analyzes the gathered information to draw a general conclusion that may be applied to other situations. It is the most basic form of reasoning in existence.

Of course, conclusions drawn from inductive reasoning may not necessarily be true, even if a person's observations, or premises, are accurate. Inductive reasoning is useful mainly for developing hypotheses that can later be tested more thoroughly, rather than arriving at laws or facts. As such, inductive reasoning is highly vulnerable to bias and logical fallacies.

For example, Joy Mmadu sat for her WAEC at Community Secondary School Mmaku and failed mathematics; Jude Mmadu sat for his WAEC at Community Secondary School Mmaku and mathematics failed; therefore 70% of students that sat for WAEC at Community Secondary School Mmaku failed mathematics. Adamu is a Fulani and reasons in a faulty way; Muhamadu is a Fulani and has faulty reasoning capacity; therefore, almost all Fulani have faulty reasoning capacity. Despite the inherent unreliability of inductive reasoning, it is one of the most essential problem-solving tools humans possess. Whether they realize it or not, people use inductive reasoning nearly every day. A person seeing dark clouds on the horizon in the morning will assume the weather will turn rainy in the afternoon and will take an umbrella to work. Instructively, in

inductive reasoning, it is possible to have the first two premises true and the conclusion false. Surprisingly, all of these conclusions may be false; they are all still logical and motivate observers to take action to improve their situations on daily basis. One thing worthy of note is that inductive reasoning does not offer strong grounds for the acceptance of its conclusions in a way it presupposes necessity.

Deductive Reasoning

Deductive reasoning is essentially the opposite of inductive reasoning. Deductive reasoning begins with a generalization as part of its premise to draw a conclusion about a specific, individual instance. The generalization applied is usually a stated law or theory—something that has not yet been proven untrue. Deductive reasoning is mostly an exercise in proper argument construction, so instead of being simply classified as either “false” or “true,” deductive arguments are labeled as being valid or invalid, sound or unsound. A valid argument is not necessarily a true one; it’s one that’s simply logical in its construction. Logically, a false conclusion must result from false premises, and a true conclusion must result from true premises. For example, the following is a valid argument:

All men are mortal

Dozie is a man

Therefore, Dozie is mortal

Consequently, it is instructive to note that in deductive argument, method/reasoning, the conclusion is usually the consequence of the premises. In other words, they follow logically and validly from the premises. In this sense any conclusion derived from the premises must presuppose necessity.

Presuppositionlessness

Philosophy has a tradition where it does not assume anything whatsoever to be the case. In this sense, it does not take anything for

guaranteed granted. Every idea must be examined critically for whatever it stands for. This is why the philosopher asks questions of critical importance in any aspect of human endeavour. For instance, as an initiate of philosophy after my first semester in philosophy, I came home that Christmas to question all aspects of discussions from the family social interaction such that my aunt vowed that if this is the method of philosophy, no other member of my family will study philosophy. This resulted from the attitudinal orientation of criticality on every discussion raised including who is God? Who created God? Is God man or woman? Is God all loving, all knowing, and powerful? If He is all knowing and all powerful; why are there all these problems in the world?

What is derivable from the above is that the philosopher questions all aspects of reality with the intention of knowing more and better. This attitudinal orientation and bent where one does not take anything for guaranteed is known as Presuppositionlessness. It is noteworthy to observe that it is only philosophy that has this method and style of arriving at the knowledge of reality.

Skepticism and Agnosticism

Philosophy is said to have begun with wonder. The marvel of creation evokes the admiration of man, and its mysteriousness excites his wonder; and this wonder naturally leads to a serious enquiry into the nature of things, for man is not content to rest in a state of awe based on ignorance and is curious to know the truth behind the enthralling wonder of the world. He investigates, speculates, argues and discusses, and comes to a settled opinion of the nature of things in this wonderful world. This becomes his philosophy. Modern man, however, seems to have stepped into the region of philosophy through doubt and skeptical thinking. Man commenced doubting the validity of authority and dogma no less than that of accepted traditional beliefs. Descartes started with

doubting everything, even the validity of thought itself. Later, Kant, too, followed the critical method of enquiry in philosophy. Bradley was of the opinion that the chief need of philosophy is “a skeptical study of first principles.” However, he adds: “By skepticism is not meant doubt about or disbelief in some tenet or tenets. I understand by it an attempt to become aware and to doubt all preconceptions.”⁷

The technique of doubt in philosophical pursuits has however, the danger of the possibility of falling into a hopeless maze of rank skepticism, with no ground left even for the skeptic to stand on, or into agnosticism, which is a smug way of coolly forgetting the basic significations of the skeptical outlook and speciously arguing that nothing definite can be known in reality. Skepticism as a principle to be followed at the commencement of the application methods in philosophy is really praiseworthy, for, all philosophy, as above said, begins in wonder and doubt. A secret and irresistible urge to know that which presents itself as something extending beyond the scope of human knowledge and a simultaneous dissatisfaction with the surface view of things is the foundation of all enterprise in philosophy. Though philosophy may begin in doubt, it should not end in doubt; for, then, the very purpose of philosophy would be defeated. If the skeptic is left to confine himself to his position of universal doubt and disbelief, he becomes guilty of dogmatism.

Empiricism and Rationalism

Empiricism as a method of philosophy is mainly confined to sense-experience. It urges that all knowledge obtained by the senses is of what is already existent outside themselves and that reason has its function in carefully judging the nature of the perceptive material provided to it by the senses. The laws of reason, according to empiricism, are copies of and controlled by knowledge which is *a posteriori*. No *a priori* knowledge in the sense of what rationalism

contends to be present in reason is ever possible. Rational concepts are by-products of the experiential material. The source of knowledge is sense-experience and not mind or reason. The method of acquiring knowledge is inductive. Ideas are reducible to sensations. Knowledge cannot be gained by merely finding that the opposite, which is inconceivable, as rationalism holds, and truth cannot be established by the fact that to deny it implies, somehow, its reaffirmation. *A priori* knowledge independent of sense-experience is inconceivable. There are, therefore, no universal and necessary self-evident truths that are adumbrated by rationalism. So goes the bold empiricism.

The defect of empiricism lies in the fact that the senses are untrustworthy as means of right knowledge. Sense-percepts have being or reality only in relation to the constitutions of the respective senses, and never independently. Minus the characteristics of the senses, our empirical percepts are nothing, which is equal to saying that we know, in an objective way, only what is already contained in the very nature of the senses subjectively. This is certainly not a reliable or valid knowledge of reality. The background of the sense-percepts ever remains unknown to us, and the attitude which we develop towards the things in themselves that lie beyond the reach of the senses is naturally one of doubt. It only means that we have to become sheer skeptics with regard to the nature of reality. In the West, Locke's empiricism naturally paved the way for Hume's skepticism. The skeptic's attitude has a very harmful reaction on the progress of philosophy, for, if we are to carry skepticism to its logical limits, there can never be any such thing as universal and necessary truths, and all that we know would be, at least on the suppositions of Hume, mere fragmentary and disconnected shreds of events, which would convey no meaning at all, due to lack of causal relation and necessary connection among themselves. Doubt and disbelief of

every settled opinion is not only non practicable but is detrimental to the very position of the doubter himself, for, a systematic doubter who seriously pursues his method without deceiving himself has to doubt his own judgments, in order that he may avoid the charge of peremptoriness in his search for truth. This, however, he cannot do. What he really does is to doubt all other positions except his own! A dogmatic adherence to one's own convictions where other views are possible is not the characteristic of a true philosophic method. To know that we do not know implies the acceptance of some criterion of certainty, some knowledge which we already possess without any trace of doubt. Truth, goodness and beauty lose their meaning and value when unconditional doubt sweeps into our hearts. Life becomes an empty affair, with no intelligible aim before it. Empiricism is the precursor of skepticism, and as a method of enquiry into the nature of Truth, it is incomplete and fallible.

The mathematical method of rationalism takes reason to be the sole means of acquiring philosophical knowledge. According to it, the objective universe is known, arranged and controlled by the *a priori* laws of reason. The universe is an expression of the innate rational nature of the knowing subject. The criterion of truth is not sensory but intellectual, rational and deductive. The mathematical methods of deduction are most suited to a proper philosophy. Knowledge is gained when the opposite of what is inconceivable is discovered. Truth can be established by the fact that to deny it implies its reaffirmation in one way or another. True knowledge is *a priori* and is independent of sense-experience. This knowledge is self-evident, and so it implies universal and necessary truths. But even rationalism taken exclusively cannot escape the charge of being non-critical in regard to its own position. How can the rationalist be sure that what he knows through his rational powers is uncontradicted knowledge? What one thinks to be a self-evident truth need not necessarily be so.

There is nothing, whatsoever, to prove that the principles that the rationalist logically deduces from his *a priori* premises really correspond to the actual characteristics of the world of experience. The geometrical method of reasoning may be very pleasing to the philosopher, but it need not carry with it the stamp of universal validity. The self-evident nature of the truths discovered independently by rationalism has been called in question. Many of the so-called self-evident truths turn out to be private to their owners and do not enjoy universal acceptance. Even in regard to the principles of logic and the laws of thought, there is no universal agreement. The rationalist is certain about the ability of reason to give him uncontradictable knowledge. He forgets, however, that reason cannot be taken as an infallible instrument of knowledge and that it's only function is the critical examination, verification and judgment of the knowledge that we obtain through the senses. Direct or immediate knowledge is given to us relatively in sense-perception, and absolutely in intuitional revelation, but not in reason. Reason has a purely negative value and is not a positive means of knowledge. The senses and intuition provide us with knowledge which reason cannot contradict, though it can criticize and judge them. There are certain facts, of course, which we cannot know through the senses; but this does not mean that reason can know them. It is only in spiritual intuition that they are realized. Unless the innate ideas of the rationalist are equated with the infallible revelations of intuition, they cannot carry much weight in the light of an experience which presents itself before us as having the value of reality. If what is called a self-evident truth is confined to reason alone, its validity is capable of being doubted. Only when it is taken to mean a spiritual realization of Reality does its truth rise above the realms of doubt and criticism.

Conclusion

There is no single writing like this that can vouch for encapsulating all the methods of philosophy in a single row as this. On this construal, I do not lay such a claim that I have achieved such a feat in this work rather, I have tried to put up a little expose of the methods of philosophy to enable beginners have basic notion and idea of what methods philosophers use in conducting their business. If I am appreciated from this perspective, I would have achieved my mission in this work. However, it is worthy of note that human societal development needs a combined method that are capable of helping in maintaining a robust understanding of reality in order to help in proper development. Africa is a cesspit of developmental challenges; it is my contention in this work that proper understanding of the methods of philosophy can help African leaders to take seasoned decisions capable of helping to improve their developmental lots. This is exactly my intention in recommending a combined method in this regards. Certainly there is no perfect single method but rather existential realities and circumstances can determine which method that is ideal for whatever that is needed at any time. Philosophy, mankind's greatest intellectual achievement is not being utilized enough as it is supposed to in order to help mankind in its developmental drive for excellence.

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