Philosophy and the Disciplines: The Borderlines

By

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Abstract

This work examines the borderlines of philosophy in relation to the central concern of other disciplines. As a preliminary step towards our examination, we attempt to uncover the specific nature of philosophy on the basis of its subject matter. We argue that while philosophy asks 'second order' questions about the totality of reality, other disciplines ask 'first order' questions about different aspects of the same reality. In spite of this distinction however, the paper agrees that the disciplines though lacking in consensus over fundamentals share borderlines with philosophy in their areas of discourse. As the argument runs, the work posits that the central thread running through the disciplines including philosophy of the analytic strand is their use of language as reflected in the meaning of words to depict social reality. The major difference is that while the practitioners of the disciplines are concerned with mere definitions or meaning of concepts, the philosopher from the stand point of Wittgenstein's reaction to the Cartesian conception of the mind and his ideas on language goes beyond mere definitions or meaning to the analysis of concepts that we employ in the human world of our day to day experience. In this way, the function of philosophy as analysis to a greater extent than other disciplines leads to the improvement in language for the purpose of expressing and communicating our ideas.

Keywords: Philosophy, Other Disciplines, Borderlines, Language and Meaning.

Introduction

It is a historical fact that philosophy is the 'mother' of the sciences. Warren Young recalls that one of the first definitions of philosophy in the earliest beginning of Western civilization in the Ancient period is "man's attempt to befuddle himself scientifically" (19). This implies that philosophy had a special relationship with other disciplines. During this period, all systematic thought was 'philosophical thinking' whatever its subject matter of inquiry. But with the advancement in thought and specialization, the natural and empirical sciences (physics, biology, mechanics, chemistry, astronomy etc) were the first to emerged from philosophy, the formal and social sciences (mathematics, geometry, religion, political science, law, sociology, psychology

etc) were the last to undergo this evolution to become independent disciplines. Given the separation of these disciplines from philosophy and their subsequent attainment of a certain degree of maturity in organization, the relationship of philosophy to the disciplines has changed overtime. Thus, an inquiry into their borderlines will help us demarcate the specific boundaries philosophy now has with other disciplines that have become so specialized in providing solutions to the problems that confront man and his environment. Our first step in this process therefore is to begin with a clear conception of what philosophy is.

The Nature, Definition and Scope of Philosophy

The etymological definition of philosophy sees the term to have been derived from the often quoted Greek words 'Philo' meaning 'love' or 'Philein' ('love of') and 'Sophia' meaning 'wisdom'. According to this definition, the origin of philosophy began around the 6th century in the Ancient Greek city of Miletus. This Eurocentric view was said to have developed from the remarks made by the Greek mystic, mathematician and philosopher Pythagoras when he was called 'wise'. He argues that since God is the possessor of wisdom, "his wisdom only consist in knowing that he was ignorant and that he should therefore not be called 'wise' but a lover of wisdom" (Ewing 9). In a more technical sense, philosophy means 'the love of wisdom' or better still 'the love of the pursuit of wisdom'. The English word 'wise' according to *Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary* literary means "having or showing experience, knowledge, good judgement, prudence etc". Therefore, when someone is called 'wise', it implies that the individual in question has certain qualities which some others do not have. Wisdom in this sense is not synonymous with knowledge because it is possible for an individual to be knowledgeable but lack wisdom. On the contrary, it is impossible to be wise but lacked knowledge. Thus, in a sense, the word wisdom implies the positive application of knowledge in judgement. For the Ancient Greeks, wisdom goes beyond mere knowledge. It meant the knowledge of the search for ultimates i.e. the origin, relations and the universal or general principles of all things both in theoretical and practical terms. In this way, philosophy deals with the systematic body of principles and assumptions underlying any particular field of experience. The way it appears in early Greek literature illustrates that philosophy begins in wonder and the attempt to satisfy curiosity, to know the origin of the objective reality and the immensity of the natural world. This desire to know gave rise to some fundamental questions about the place of the history of man in the 'drama' of the universe. According to Aristotle, "it is owning to their wonder that men now

begin and first began to philosophize". Plato lent credence to Aristotle's view when he says "this sense of wonder is the mark of the philosopher. Philosophy indeed has no other origin".

Consequently, for the Ancient Greeks, philosophy grows out of the developing recognition of the problems of human existence. For them, the word 'philosophia' in origin became a very general word for the pursuit of mental excellence. The pursuit of this mental excellence is in line with the professional or academic conception of philosophy which defines its subject matter as dealing with the study of the rules and methods of correct reasoning (Logic), the analysis of the scope, source and limitations of human knowledge (Epistemology), the science of being, its origin and nature of the universe (metaphysics), the study of the morality of human actions in society (Ethics) and the science of the appreciation of beauty and the beautiful as manifested in nature or in a work of art (Aesthetics). Although, the different branches of philosophy deal with different aspects of human problems, there are other sub-dimensions of philosophy which deal with the specific objects of its inquiry that attempt to investigate the nature and foundations of other disciplines. The philosophy of mind for example deals with philosophical issues or problems concerning the science of psychology such as whether there are psychological laws, the relationship of psychology to neuroscience, issues in cognitive psychology i.e. the concept of innateness, the bearing of evolution on psychological phenomena, the nature of personal identity and of our cognitive and mental capacities, the mind-body problem, the privacy of experience, the knowledge of ourselves and other minds, the relationship between consciousness and intentionality etc. Other areas of special interest include; philosophy of science, philosophy of social sciences, philosophy of religion, philosophy of history, philosophy of law, philosophy of education, social and political philosophy etc.

The Functions of Philosophy

Most people who are interested in studying philosophy have had difficulties seeing how and where a philosopher can take up a career or vocation in society. One single factor that has contributed to this uncertainty is the mistaken belief that philosophy as an academic discipline has no relevance in nation building. According to this view, philosophers confine themselves to the ivory towers detached from the problems of real life. Francis Minimah has however corrected this misconception by arguing contrary that philosophers from Socrates, Plato, Aristotle to Karl Marx, Frederich Engels, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, John Stuart Mill among others have made tremendous contributions to the development of different societies of their time. Their ideas have

significantly shaped and continue to have enormous practical influence all over the world (*Contemporary General Studies* 560-563). While it is true that most philosophers in the past two hundred years have been academics, it is not surprising to discover that majority of philosophers in the history of philosophy were actively involved in one vocation or the other. That is, they earned their living doing one thing or something else while they thought and wrote philosophy in their free time. The study of philosophy can be an integral part of a person's life regardless of his or her vocation. It can help prepare the individual for that vocation as well as for the living of life. Little wonder then that philosophers have had many different vocations. Socrates for example was a monk; St. Augustine and George Berkeley were missionaries and bishops; Rene Descartes was a soldier; Baruch Spinoza was a lens grinder; Gottfried Leibniz was a librarian and lawyer; Francis Bacon was a scientist and politician; John Locke was a medical doctor; David Hume was a historian and secretary; Bertrand Russell, Alfred North Whitehead, Gottlob Frege etc were mathematicians; John Dewey, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Martin Heidegger etc. were University lecturers while Karl Marx and Frederich Nietzsche were newspaper journalists and classicist respectively.

From this initial remark, we may now ask: what exactly is the function of philosophy? Of what use is it? Harold Larrabee asserts that "nowhere in our discussion (concerning what philosophy is) is there greater danger of over simplifying the matter than in answering the question "why do men philosophize?" (91). This should serve a warning to us as we turn to the question of the functions of philosophy. For, of course answers to Larrabee's question consist in statements of the motives of philosophizing. Correlated with each motive of philosophy, there is a function which philosophy serves, more or less satisfactorily; the function, namely, of quieting in each case, the drive behind the philosophizing by realizing the goal sought. Corresponding to the multiplicity and complexity of functions, Larrabee discusses mainly the scientific, religious, social and play motives in philosophy. The first being a craving for knowledge, the second a perplexity in the individual's fundamental beliefs concerning "the final disposition of the world toward his efforts" (97), the third a dissatisfaction in the prevailing social conditions and the fourth a desire, perhaps escapist for the pleasure of the philosophizing itself. The corresponding functions in philosophy we may say would be to give man the knowledge he craves for, to offer rational criticisms of our religious beliefs, to supply knowledge whereby to patch up or revolutionize the prevailing social organization or to provide opportunity for the "cosmic game

of chess". (Larrabee 97). If we thought of the above functions of philosophy as its only functions, we should indeed be committing the error of oversimplification against what Larrabee's remarks have warned us. One function that is unique to philosophy which can be deduced from the remarks made by Larrabee is that "…it is this demand that life be rationally, illuminated for practical purposes which has turned many men toward reflection" (100). This sort of "…reflection as justifies the adoption of a fundamental life purpose is always philosophical" (Perry 144). In such assertions as these, philosophy is thought in some ways as supplying rational grounds for practice, as a course of thought growing naturally out of the perplexities.

Far from being the 'remote', 'abstract' intellectual activity that it is often suspected of being, philosophy is related to the problems of everyday life. In its systematic, highly critical developed form and as an outgrowth of the cause of thought undertaken at times, philosophical problems are ultimately problems which arise directly or implicitly when one is confronted with blind and unreflective options and is required by wisdom to make a choice on the basis of some scale of values or whenever one's approval or disapproval is questioned with those of another and a rational adjustment is sought. In relation to the problems of everyday life, it is impossible to separate philosophical problems from those of the market place or the home, church, school or any other area of social or personal life: for philosophical problems are rooted in and constitute a central element of such everyday problems. We may then conceive of the philosopher as a thinker equipped with the intellectual resources for an intensive critical examination of things, issues and problems of society. In charting the course of everyday living, the philosopher is seen as a navigator in the sense that he attempts to show on the one had wherein value in its various forms resides and on the other hand the most efficient ways of securing it. He may be called upon for this in reference to any particular area of life or even to the whole of life. In the latter case, the search for criteria in the form of objective knowledge, the standard of truth and falsity, right and wrong that are essential to the responsible choice of life purpose become one important function of philosophy.

The second function of philosophy can be shown in the way it subjects our beliefs to critical evaluation to see whether they systematically interpret or justify all the facts of experience known to man. Here, philosophy according to Edgar Brightman functions "essentially as a spirit or method of approaching experience rather than a body of conclusions about experience" (7). This implies that the philosopher must view all data and propositions that we

make about our world with searching scrutiny, rejecting bias or prejudices of any kind. It is in this act of evaluation that the features of philosophy is distinguished. According to Marie Eboh:

> Philosophy calls for a thoughtful examination and analysis of data and viewpoints. By means of critical examination, the philosopher tries to evaluate the information and conflicting beliefs that humans have as regards the universe in general and the world of human affairs in particular. From this, he/she tries to workout some general, systematic, coherent and consistent picture of all that we know and think in order to provide a framework in which the man in the street may place his own conception of the cosmos. It also provides a focus through which we can review our roles and activities so as to determine if they have any significance (18).

This emphasis on the philosopher as a critical inquirer no doubt, indicates that philosophy at its simplest is a dispassionate quest for wisdom, a respect for truth and an open mind for answers to questions that confront us as we reflect on human experience. In this way, the philosopher, while devoting himself to the contemplation of the problems of the world in the most abstract manner is conscious of the ultimate relevance of his thinking to the practical concerns of life. This role is further rejoined by Kwasi Wiredu when he says that "the function of philosophy everywhere is to examine the intellectual foundations of our life, using the best available modes of knowledge and reflection for human well being" (62).

Having singled out the functions which philosophy alone serves, our next task will be to uncover the borderlines between philosophy and the disciplines. We shall begin this by placing philosophy first with sociology. This procedure is necessary in reversing the natural order since sociology was the last of the social sciences to emerge from philosophy. The second more important reason is because the interrelationship of man in all fields of human endeavor has severe implications for society which is what sociology studies.

Philosophy and Sociology

Sociology has been defined primarily as the study of the origins, organizations, institutions and development of human social life, groups and societies (Giddens 2). Unlike philosophy where the speculative method is used, sociology employs the scientific principles and methods to seek causal explanation of social events, conditions and social phenomena and acquire systematic and objective knowledge through observations and reasoning of the variations or changes in society. In its quest for knowledge of society, sociologists pose first order questions

that have to do with societal organization as the community, the class, or the family that will lead to an understanding of social life and social problems. Sociologists may want to ask for example why some people are discriminated against on the basis of parental background, religion, race, ethnicity in a society that is committed to the ideals of equality?, What are the long-term effects of population growth? Does globalization encourage violence? What influence do drugs such as marijuana or alcohol, child abuse and domestic violence have on society? Why do some people break social rules while others do not? etc. However, there are certain other sociological questions which touch much more closely on the area of philosophical questions namely those concerning social mores. For a study of the mores of a given society is in effect a study of the firmest and most confident approvals and disapprovals of the members of that society. We are here speaking particularly of ethnology and anthropology as aspects of sociology. A study of mores in which we intend would be Ruth Benedict's views as expressed in his *Patterns of Culture* (1-385). In a sense, sociologists as well as philosophers study the approvals and disapprovals of given individuals. As we have occasion to note in other connections, sociologists take approvals and disapprovals collectively as a manifestation and or effect of the association of individuals (Lumley, Ch. XXV, 4). In philosophy, however, mores may be taken simply as a manifestation of the individual's nature. The line separating the two fields is to be drawn in these borderline areas by determining clearly the role which appraisals play in each. We have already attempted this in reference to philosophy by noting that statements of appraisal are included within the data of philosophy and the meaning of appraisal terms (or value-connotations) within the subject matter of philosophy.

In sociology, we can note the linguistic behaviour of individuals of certain groups and their statements of appraisal may be regarded as an aspect of their associative behaviour. This is a characteristic of social organization that undergoes the process of social change, as is true in the case of any other realm of behaviour. To examine the linguistic behaviour of any specified group from this point of view would, then, be a sociological task. The branch of sociology dealing with this aspect is the sociology of language. Such an examination would include an attempt to discover, describe, and generalize linguistic behaviour. In the case of statements of appraisal, this would mean, on the one hand, a statement of the particular employments of the given value terms, found through empirical observation to be made by individuals as members of the given group, and on the other hand a statement of the general laws, or "patterns", of the collective

linguistic usage of the given value terms. We must state however that statements of appraisal (of appraisal regarded from the sociological perspective of associative behaviour, are included within the subject matter (and not the data) of sociology. For the discovery and description of such statements constitute the end result of successful sociological investigation. Since it is not merely statements of appraisal, but linguistic behaviour in general which is a possible subject of sociological investigation, we may say that any statement of value connotation in philosophy is included within the subject matter of the sociology of language. This points to one important mark of distinction between sociology and philosophy; for in the latter, this very end result of the former constitutes, ideally, the starting point of investigation. This distinction must be taken as given on the basis of which to test the two fields at the particular point of contact under examination is that while philosophy is dependent upon sociology for a precise and empirically verified statement of its data, sociology is dependent upon philosophy for a scientifically respectable completion (along the lines indicated above) of the generic nature of investigation it initiates.

There is a second mark of distinction between philosophy and sociology at this borderline area. As we have seen, both study appraisals. It is the angle of interest which each takes that differentiates them. But does this interest lie in a description of relevant linguistic behaviour, or in an analysis of value connotation? We have seen that philosophers, as such, are not interested in the emotional factor of appraisals which we may characterize broadly as the attitudes of approval and disapproval but only in the connotative factor. This is not the case in sociology, where interest is taken in the emotional factor. This is true especially in reference to studies of the individual as affected by his social environment (i.e. the "person" as done in social psychology), but it is also true in reference to the study of the crowd, where for example the influence of the leader in manipulating the emotional reactions of the members of the crowd usually occurs. Sociologists employ in this study whatever evidences of the emotional factor are available. An ethnologist for example would not note merely the work in which individuals of a given society express their approvals and disapprovals, but also the 'rituals' they perform in their daily lives. This interest in the emotional factor of appraisal and the consequent interest in various non linguistic manifestations of appraisals is a second point of differentiation between philosophy and sociology. There are of course behaviouristic sociologists for whom these remarks would not apply.

We may note in passing that if the philosophical term 'right' as applied to action, were found to have as its emotive meaning (roughly) approval at the time by the speaker, then sociological investigation of approval and disapproval of action would be of highest importance to the philosopher in his attempt to discover the connotative meaning of "right". For even if the approval were not stated, we could know that 'right' would correctly express the approval in question and thus we could fit our definition of the term to the approvals uncovered through sociological investigation. Thus, the differentiation of philosophy and sociology is sometimes obscured. This is due to the fact that the general laws of linguistic behaviour discovered through sociological investigation take the same form as the general principles of philosophy represent an application of knowledge gained through linguistic analysis and construction taking empirical laws of sociology as data. It is in this sense that Peter Winch argues that "any worthwhile study of society must be philosophical in character and any worthwhile philosophy must be concerned with the nature of human society" (3).

Philosophy and Psychology

Psychology is the scientific study of human behaviour. It is an attempt to describe the way human mind works or operates that is, what the various mental processes and individual behaviour are. As a social science, it is a descriptive enterprise that centers its attention on the physiological and psycho-analytic aspects (both internal and external) of the knowing process – on the brain, stimulus response mechanism – emotions, memory, perception, personality, intelligence, the nervous system and so on (Skinner 38). In the study of individual actions as they respond to the environment, the borderline between philosophy and psychology as we shall see is that both disciplines are most closely related in their respective treatments of the problem of perception. Both in a sense study the given element in experience and its relation to the process of perceptual observation. Let us begin first by saying that philosophical interest in these subjects is directly or indirectly semantical. We will note some typical philosophical questions in this connection. Philosophy asks whether sense data continue to exist un-sensed, whether they are parts of the surfaces of physical objects, whether they are objects distinct from the act of sensing? etc. Do not all such questions turn on answers to semantical questions concerning the meaning of "sense-data", "physical object", "surface", "part", "exist", etc?. For example, if we find that the blue which is immediately sensed and which is called by some philosophers a sense datum is analyzable into a species of sensing and if we find that by "exist" in this connection is

meant the sort of being a particular has, then we may say that the sense datum an individual senses at time t_1 no longer exists at t_2 if, at t_2, neither the given individual nor any other individual is sensing the given sense datum. As noted earlier, philosophical interests are not only semantical, it is ultimately a semantical interest in value connotations. The terms whose meanings are in question, indirectly, in the philosophical treatment of questions relating to perception (in the manner just indicated) are philosophical term only because questions concerning their meanings are implicit in questions directly concerning value connotations. The meaning of all these terms in such cases would have to be analyzed.

In psychology, the interest in the subject of perception is not rooted ultimately in a semantical interest in value connotations. In the first place, psychological interest is not exclusively semantical. Typical psychological questions would call for a statement of the laws operative in the process of sensation and perception. For example, it would be a psychological job to determine how we perceive distance or how we experience depth in objects. In answer to this general question, such empirical facts as the joint operation of two eyes, differences in size among perceived objects, degree of clearness in which objects are seen, etc. would be relevant. The question would not concern the meaning of any of these terms, but rather would call for an examination of the facts involved, the results of which are expressed in words whose meaning is assumed. Furthermore, even if the meanings of all the relevant words were exhaustively known, the answer to such psychological questions would not be evident in the absence of further psychological investigation, whereas an analogous remark does not hold for philosophy. We can also mention the distinction between psychological and ethical (or philosophical) hedonism as a borderline where the distinction between the two disciplines depends on whether the question asked is semantical (directly or indirectly). Ethical hedonism is the view that 'good' means pleasant or conducive to pleasure, whereas psychological hedonism is the view that a person always as a matter of fact acts for the purpose of gaining happiness.

Philosophy and Natural Sciences

Science can be defined as the knowledge derives from observation, experience and experimentation that is widely believed to be the paradigm of rational and objective inquiry. Given this definition, may we first of all ask whether philosophy is a science? That is, can we say that because philosophy as well as science is an attempt to search for objective knowledge as distinguished from insufficient grounded opinion or poetic expression and thus that philosophical

method is ideally scientific? Both the philosopher and scientist are motivated by the curious desire to attain objective knowledge of reality; even though the method they employ and the kind of knowledge they seek is different. In investigating the nature of reality which is ideally specified and stipulated as the data of the inquiry, the philosopher stops and looks back into the meaning of reality. He assumes and asks whether there is even such a thing as reality at all? Upon critical investigation, it appears that what he means by this assumption is simply that it is the publicly perceptible world of our day to day experience which the scientist sees as the real world that they both propose to investigate (Ducasse 153-154). Following this argument, Ducasse mentions such publicly observable events as these:

> …that a given string is stretched that (the physicist) plucks it; that a sound occurs; that a certain stretched string is longer than another; that certain metal fillings are clinging to a certain metal bar; that a certain body is moving…that a certain pointer is at a certain place on a graduated scale, that on a certain occasion, no sound occurs when a given bell is struck… (119).

The interest taken by the physicists (natural scientists in general) in such publicly perceptible facts has to do with the relations which hold between some of these facts statable in empirical laws. What is sought in the natural sciences is then (in part) a descriptive, generalized account of publicly perceptible facts that are implicit in them. Also sought in the natural sciences is a theoretical explanation of these facts i.e. a supposition, or construction from which it follows deductively that the ascertained laws, which are to be explained, are what, as a matter of fact, they have been ascertained to be. A theory must also have predictive power and can only be verifiable through further experimentation (Ducasse Ch. XI 3-4). Thus, it is only when we speak loosely and broadly – and says that both the philosopher and natural scientist "study reality" – that we are apt to confuse the two spheres. Ontology is a semantical inquiry into the meanings of the term "real"; natural science is an investigation, of the sort outlined, of the facts comprising what is, for the natural scientists, the real world.

The method of science in its quest for truth about the way things are, about the causes of earthquakes, whether water boils at 100^0C? Or how a certain chemical react under a given condition for example, involves a systematic procedure of observation which leads to generalization, experimentation, setting up of hypothesis and finally knowledge. The concept of what science is requires a description of the activity which it involves. In such descriptions of the different aspects of reality as phenomena, physics for example studies the nature, constituents

and laws of the motion of matter and energy and the relationship between them. Chemistry concerned itself with the scientific study of the structure of chemical substances, elements, atoms and molecules and their reaction with one another while biology centers its attention on the study of living organisms. Philosophy in contrasts to the natural sciences is not overwhelmingly devoted to the question of method nor does it involve such a systematic methodology in the attempt to grasp reality in its totality. Yet, "philosophy like science consists of theories or insights arrived at as a result of systematic reflection" (Leighton 4). As a process of inquiry into the nature of reality, 'philosophy' according to Jacques Maritain "is concerned with everything, is a 'universal science'" (103). Philosophy studies all things in their ultimate or first causes. Its method of investigation involves speculation, analysis, interpretation with a view to evaluate, criticize and assess their meaning and significance. It is in this sense that philosophy (is seen as the most general of all forms of human inquiry that) does not have any limitation in its scope and subject matter. Almost all the questions that are of interest to the philosopher are: 'How do we know whether there is a real world outside the mind?' 'Is it even possible for us to know at all?' 'Why is there something instead of nothing?' 'Does the universe has a purpose?' 'Is it evolving towards some goal?' 'Why should a human being be moral?' 'What principles are presupposed in valid inference?' 'How trustworthy is induction as a form of reasoning?' 'Do things happen by chance or are they determined by a super intelligence?' etc. The asking of these questions and many more whose answers cannot be found in scientific laboratory belong to philosophy.

Philosophy and Religion

The etymology of the word 'religion' implies a relationship between two entities namely the human person and the divine which is believed to exist. In this case, religion as "an institutionalized system of symbols, beliefs, values and practices focus on questions of ultimate meaning" (Brothers 1). It aligns man with a transcendent being or a deity. According to the sociologist Emile Durkheim religion is "a unified system of beliefs and practices which unite one single moral community, all those who adhere to it" (47) while for the philosopher Immanuel Kant, religion is nothing more than "the recognition of all duties as divine commands" (156). These definitions imply that religion is an attitude towards the divine. Within this, we find the presupposition of religion. It is this presupposition that give the sense or meaning to religious discourse. Giving the characteristics of religion, one question we may ask is: What is its borderline with philosophy? In answering this question, we can note however that both

philosophy and religion have a common concern in seeking the ultimate knowledge of the origin and purpose of the world; they however differ in their respective methods to achieve such knowledge. Thus, while philosophy achieves its truth through questions, speculation, analysis and critical scrutiny, truth in religion is essentially one of interpreting and defending articles of dogma derived from sources whose authority is founded on faith. On this borderline, philosophy perhaps has a closer affinity to religion than natural science. For the problem of value plays a central role in religion as well as in philosophy. An important function of the institutions of religion is to make men not only just but also good that is to exhort them to act and eventually to will altruistically. An important factor of the religiousness of a man is his will to do what is right. An important service of a man's religious belief is the sanction it provides for the good life. Philosophy on the other hand is an attempt to gain knowledge ultimately concerning value. It attempts to enlighten men as to what is right and good, but not to exhort them into right action. In this way, philosophy is distinct from religion.

Furthermore, when we turn to the differentiation of philosophy from theology which is the "science of God" or more particularly, the discipline dealing with questions as the nature and existence of God, we find ourselves faced with a more difficult task. As a matter of fact, philosophy and theology are both concerned with the nature and existence of God. Thus, if there is a distinction to be drawn between the two, it will have to be seen in terms of method rather than subject matter or interest (Larrabee 48). In this connection, we must note the distinction between natural and traditional theology. The latter accepts certain truths as revealed and thus unquestionable and attempts to expound, develop, systematize, support rationally defend and advocate these truths (which constitute the doctrine of a particular religion in question). Natural theology on the other hand attempts to arrive at truths concerning the existence and nature of God, his relation to the universe and man, the possibility and methods of knowing him, through the exclusive use of man's reason, observation and experience in general. Thus, no truth, for this discipline, can be accepted as revealed until it has been shown rationally that there is a God and that he did inspire the writers recording this truth. The most radical perhaps, of natural theologians in intent are those of the early twentieth century who claimed to make theology a science as rigorous as the empirical science and where religious experience offers the data of this science. D. C. Macintosh and H. N. Wieman are examples of such theologians. In distinguishing philosophy from traditional theology, we rely wholly upon man's own intellectual attempts to

arrive at knowledge, as distinct from faith. But natural theology if carried out strictly according to its proposed method may properly be considered a branch of philosophy. However, natural theologians have failed to do this; they have apparently had the conclusions to their investigations in mind at the outset have loaded the evidence so to speak. Here, we can note the description of religious experience offered by Macintosh in his *Theology as an Empirical Science* is phrased in terms of the presence of God (as Holy Ghost). In following this procedure, Macintosh risks begging the question of God's existence since he assumes there is religious experience (43).

Philosophy, other Disciplines and the Notion of Meaning

The structure of our thoughts (language: words and meanings) and how it relate to the structure of the world is central to every discipline and indeed in a special way to philosophy. This role, as we have noted is particularly evident in the type of questions asked which relate to the descriptive facts of our experience and manifested in linguistic articulation that enable the disciplines to interpret and comprehend reality. In this way, language (words or concepts) play a very important role in constituting the data or facts of experience that provide some sensuous imagery for the mind. Clearly, this suggests that in communicating effectively, the disciplines have denotation of concepts and are interested in the meaning of the terms and language through which thoughts are expressed. For example, concepts like 'God', 'gods', 'divinities', 'spirit', 'devotion', 'worship', 'the holy', 'immortality', 'soul', etc are prevalent in the sacred or inspired writings or scriptures of a particular religion such that when a believer speaks religiously, his language is tied to the act of trust, obedience and faith as revealed by God. The problem of the existence of God must, of course, wait upon the solution to this prior problem as to the meaning of the term. If it turns out, he may define 'God' in term of the possibilities of religious experience or a transcendent consciousness or purpose. We can refer to, St. Anselm's definition which holds that God is that greater than which no other can be thought. In this way, the meaning of God and his ontological status involves a number of psychological, metaphysical and epistemological questions. We can note for example the question "Is divine existence credible?" raised by Norman Kemp Smith (209-234). In some religious doctrines, we also have responses to meaning and purpose of life. While the communists are materialistic about it, the classical Buddhists and adherents of other Asian religions deny the existence of a super human force only to accept the purpose of discovering oneself by introspection. For them, God is represented as an

impersonal empowering process and an ultimate enlightenment called 'Nirvana'. Thus, language in religion provides a unified picture of the cosmos and man's experience of the ultimate reality as well as the expression of that awareness in concrete life.

Like religion, other social sciences (i.e. sociology and psychology) also employ concepts embedded in technical language and procedures used in constructing theories, collating and analyzing data. Such words like 'the family', 'institution', 'class', 'government', 'social order', 'groups', 'society', 'justice', equality', 'liberty', etc are vehicles of thought to construct the world of our experience. Semantical analyses and constructions are also undertaken in psychology. For example, psychologists would be interested in the meaning of such terms as 'perception', 'consciousness', 'mental capacities', 'intentionality', 'other minds', 'self', 'innateness', 'psyche' 'sensation', 'motive', 'drive', 'emotion' etc. Thus, in analyzing "perception" a psychologist considers mental process of the individual. The method of inspection when employed as final test is suited, to reveal merely one's understanding or idea of the meaning of word – a job of psychological introspection. The natural sciences also use language to structure the world in categories, forms or symbolic representations or abstractions. Concepts like 'substance', 'causality', 'motion', 'space', 'heat', 'time', 'quantity', 'quality', 'relation', 'energy', 'sound', 'water', 'iron', 'velocity', 'organism', 'simultaneity' etc. are commonly used by scientists in the explanation of reality. In employing such concepts, these disciplines assume that we know what we mean by them. In fact, the concern of the practitioners of the disciplines with the meaning of terms or concepts used is only in so far as their purposes are served and not that it is their business to engage in the clarification of the concepts they employ. Such discussions are not important to the disciplines but to philosophy.

In our formation of concepts about the world, the problem of how thoughts relate to reality has been a major preoccupation of philosophers.

> To ask whether reality is intelligible is to ask about the relation between thought and reality. In considering the nature of thought, one is led also to consider the nature of language. Inseparably bound up with a question whether reality is intelligible, therefore is the question of how language is connected with reality, of what it is to say something. In fact, the philosopher's interest in language lies not so in the solution of particular linguistic confusions for their own sake as in the solution of confusions about the nature of language in general (Winch 11-12).

This is why C. H. Langford defines philosophy as the clarification of concepts in their minutest details (20). It is in this quest for analysis that Socrates uses the 'dialectic' as a question and answer method in a relentless effort to get to the truth of what was meant. In his later *Dialogues*, Plato gave much consideration to the nature of language as forms, signs or ideas of things that exist on their own. On his part, Aristotle's work on language differs radically from those of Plato. He criticizes Plato's ideas on the grounds that words and names are signs of objects and not objects themselves. Contrary to Plato, Aristotle argues that objects (reality) exist in themselves irrespective of our thoughts or knowledge of them. For this reason, the human mind can know objects as they are. In his view, language expresses reality and that truth is the 'conformity of our minds (thoughts) with reality'. This ideational theory of meaning i.e. that meaning is the idea of a thing in the mind was to have a decisive influence on Locke's empiricism whose epistemological consideration was that there is no content in our conceptual scheme. His notion on language as seen as mental images, ideas or symbols of what we put into it was a reaction against the rationalists' theory of innate concepts as espoused by Descartes in the seventeenth century. It was in response to this that Kant argues that objective science of nature consists in the ability of the human mind to construct and invent various linguistic and conceptual schemes that render our phenomenal world intelligible. The concepts or categories of substance and causality for example are meaningful only when applied to the phenomenal order of appearance; such that instead of deriving meaning from things, we impose meaning on them. Accordingly, Kant concludes that our knowledge of the natural world is always a knowledge of phenomena (reality as it appears to us) and that we never know objects are they are in themselves (noumena). B. E. Nwigwe et al lent credence to Kant's view when he writes:

> Language is central in our thinking…The objects of experience do not exist separately from concepts we have of them. For this obvious reason, words enter into the very structure of our experience. The way we perceive the world…is a function of our linguistic apparatus. What this means is that…the mind is made up of conceptual schemes with which we think. These conceptual schemes constitute…the categories of the mind. It is through language alone that we achieve forms,… which are phenomenalistically derived from material realities (1).

By the beginning of the twentieth century, philosophers like Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein began to argue that the traditional quarrel in philosophy is traceable to the subtle misapplication of language. In seeing linguistic analysis as the proper

method of philosophy, Russell posits: "Ever since I abandoned the philosophy of Kant and Hegel, I have sought solutions to philosophical problems by means of analysis and I remain persuaded…that only by analyzing is 'progress' possible" (57). Russell's argument is that through the clarification of concepts and linguistic analysis which philosophy does, we can be more conscious, articulate and precise in the use of words. This view was further developed by Wittgenstein who in his early writing which is sometimes called the 'Old Wittgenstein' or 'Wittgenstein 1' – the *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* (1919) puts forward the thesis that "philosophy is not a body of doctrines but an activity (- the activity of displaying the limits of what can be said). The object of philosophy is the logical clarification of thought" (4.112). Here, Wittgenstein develops the picture theory of meaning by asking the question of how language is possible to describe the world. In his own words, he says "what can be said at all can be said clearly; and whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent" (27). The philosophical problem of Wittgenstein is that the logic of our day to day language is problematic and therefore inadequate for philosophical reflection. For him, there is the need to develop an ideal language that would be strictly logical to enable us attain certitude in philosophical reflection.

The relationship of language to the world and the relationship of language to ourselves, our own thoughts are the two problems Wittgenstein sets out to tackle. In his *Notebooks*, he writes: "My whole task consists in explaining the nature of sentences" (39). Wittgenstein concern was to find out what makes it possible for a combination of words to represent facts in the world? How is it that by producing a sentence, we can say something, can tell someone that so and so is the case? Wittgenstein's explanation consists in the striking idea that language consists of atomic propositions that is basic statements that refer to particular states of affairs, particular fact and combination rules (syntactical and semantic) by means of which we combine the atomic propositions to form more complex statements. Thus, a sentence is a picture. In fact, according to Wittgenstein, the ideal language (principia) pictures or mirrors the world, just as a map mirrors it. It we wish to discover whether town A is North of town B in Nigeria, we can do so by referring to a map since a map in a sense pictures the terrain. It pictures it because there is identity of structure between the points on the map and the points on the ground. A perfect language is like a map. It pictures the structure of reality. The ideal language thus gives us the structure of facts since facts are composed of objects and their properties. A picture is a fact namely the fact that the picture elements are related to one another in a definite way. A picture

fact shows that the things the picture elements stand for are related in the same way as the picture elements – a picture must have something in common with what it pictures. This common thing is the pictures "form of representation". Thus, through atomic propositions (relating to facts) and their combination rules (logic helps us to decide what combinations are possible and what combinations are not possible and in this, logic helps to trace the boundaries of the speakable). Language provides a picture of the world in the same way as musical notes in a record provide a model of the music to be produced. For this reason, the structure of language tells us something about the structure of the world.

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein shows the boundaries of what can be said. This, according to Wittgenstein is the task of philosophy. Philosophy must be a purely critical activity in that it must confine itself to trace the boundaries of what can be said. There is no doubt in Wittgenstein's mind that what most matter is precisely what cannot be talked about. Thus originally, he wanted the editor to write at the beginning of the *Tractatus* that the book is made of two parts (i) what is in the book and (ii) what is not said in it and the latter part is the most important. According to Wittgenstein, language can speak about the world, but cannot speak about itself. How does language relate to the world what cannot be said by means of language? When we try to do this, we fall into paradoxes and contradictions such as the liars' paradox – *"what I am saying is false "*. This statement is a paradox because if it is true, it must be false and if it is false, it must be true. This shows according to Wittgenstein that language cannot be used in a self-referential way, that is, it cannot1 be used to talk about itself. Language can only show its relation to reality; it cannot say it. Propositions can model reality, they can describe reality but they cannot describe how they describe it. In order to do that, we would have to place ourselves outside of language. We would have to invent another language to speak about the language we use but this is not possible. Even if by hypothesis we could invent another language, we would meet the same problem that is we would have to explain how language 2 relates to language 1. But to do this, we would have to invent a third language and we would become involved in an infinite regression. The point is that we cannot use the very same language whose ability to describe the world is in question to validate the language – world relation. What makes it possible for language to picture the world is not itself a fact in the world. It lies outside the factual world. In this way, Wittgenstein's pictorial sense of language rejects metaphysical judgements because they do not state facts about the world. Similarly, no moral (ethical) and

aesthetic propositions are possible (6.42). Ethical values can only be shown through our actions but cannot be talked about. Values are not facts and therefore cannot be talked about.

With the shortcomings of the *Tractatus,* Wittgenstein develops his later views in what is sometimes called the 'New Wittgenstein or Wittgenstein II' – *The Philosophical Investigations* (1953) in which his method of analysis no longer consists in the explanation of the function or meaning of language but in the description of its uses. In correcting the misgiving of his earlier work, Wittgenstein redefines the task of philosophy as the "battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language" (*Investigations 109).* According to him, we are trap as a fly in a bottle because of the use of language in ways other than their ordinary or every day speech. He tells us that the 'meaning' of a word is the way language as a human invention operates in a social context. We create language and its meaning is dependent in the way it is used or applied; hence it has many purposes in such a system. Words are like "tools in a tool box; there is a harmer, pliers, a saw, a screw-driver, a rule, a glue-pot, glue, nails and screws - the function of words are as diverse as the function of these objects" (11). By comparing all language with all games in having the same rules, functions and meanings, Wittgenstein sees language as a 'form of life' usually called the 'Language-Game Theory'. This study of the ordinary uses of language unlike his earlier views does not completely reject metaphysics. His argument is that the metaphysician in attempting to explain reality tries to formulate what cannot be articulated by language thereby producing ambiguities that create 'grammatical illusion' because of the lack of clarity and precision. The only way to communicate effectively according to Wittgenstein "is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use" (116). We must uncover "the bumps that the understanding has got by running its head against the limits of language" (119). This practical character of linguistic expressions and the influence which this can have on philosophical reflection was adopted by George E. Moore (1873-1958), Gilbert Ryle (1900-1976), John L. Austin (1911-1960), Peter F. Strawson (1919-2006), John Searle (1932-2016) and many other philosophers.

From the analytic conception of philosophy just mentioned, it can be asserted that philosophy is a specialized discipline – a 'second order' activity sometimes referred to as the 'science of all sciences'. As a critical inquiry into the basic presuppositions of the disciplines, philosophy is dedicated not only to the definition or meaning of concepts but also the analysis and clarification of the conceptual problems of the other disciplines. In doing this, the role of the

philosopher in pressing his inquiry into the various forms of human problems is seen "…as an underlabourer in clearing the ground…and removing some of the rubbish that lies in the way of knowledge" (Locke 11) which prevent the possibility of objectivity in the disciplines. By engaging in a critique of science for example, the philosopher analyses the conceptual structure and methodology of science including conditions of reliable observation, classification, generalization and verification. In our opinion, the argument so far developed is that philosophy as a second order activity is concerned with conceptual problems of the disciplines – the way they use words, the kinds of meaning they have and the different forms of life they are part of. It is in this more general sense that the philosophical problems in the disciplines are thoroughly investigated. For example in the sciences, we have the philosophical problem of the nature of space and time. Is space empty? Is it an entity that exists independently of physical objects? Or is it dependent on the existence of objects that are spatially and temporary related? The absolute conception of Newton and the relational account of Leibniz can be distinguished by the answers which they gave to these questions. Another example is the philosophical treatment of the problem of causality in science by Hume and its bearing on the question of objectivity. In psychology, we can cite the philosophical problem of personal identity. What makes an individual today the same person as he was ten years ago? What exactly is a person? We also have the philosophical problems of determining the status of the theorems of mathematics and physics? Are they necessary truths established by a priori reasoning or are they contingent truths to be proved experimentally?

It is never a philosophical task merely to give an account, descriptive or explanatory of facts discovered through empirical observation. This is not to say that the knowledge philosophy seeks is not knowledge of the nature of certain empirical facts. For example, to analyze the meaning of the term 'art' is to discover the nature of actual 'factual' cases of artistic activity. However, it is the nature these facts must have to be cases of art creation that is sought, and this is not merely a report of empirical observation – though such reports are useful in determining the answer to the philosophical question. A mere description of the activity performed by the artist which does not include the attempt to determine what it is about this activity which makes the man an "artist" – is not a philosophical task. To ask the artist for example whether a particular picture is beautiful is not a philosophical question. But the question: "What is beauty" is philosophical. Again, to ask the metreologist "Do you know whether it will rain tomorrow?" is

not a conceptual or philosophical question. But the question "What is knowledge?" is of philosophical importance: Similarly to ask the question: "Is it true that mosquitoes cause malaria?" may trouble the scientist but not the philosopher because it is a factual and not a conceptual or philosophical question. But the questions: "What is causality?" "What is truth?" are of basic philosophical inquiry. If one is to pass judgement for example on educational opportunities offered at a given University, one must know what courses are offered at that University, what staff are on the faculty? What the administrative policy there is and the social and aesthetic opportunities etc. To determine these facts is obviously not a philosophical job. But one would have to consider also such questions as these: What is a University education or education in general? What constitutes a good education? What does it mean to call anything "good"? How can these questions be answered? It should be obvious from our discussion that questions of the latter sort deal with the meaning of words either (directly or indirectly) and are thus of the generic sort that philosophy asks. They are also of the specific sort philosophy asks, since they are concerned, directly or ultimately, with value connotations. And they are questions of the sort one must answer before one can pass judgement on the worth of anything – as in the case of the University education. The point is that only in philosophy are such questions as these dealt with and thus only through philosophical reflections can one gain the meaning which serves the function mentioned.

In addition to the above questions which constitute the core of philosophical problems in the disciplines, there are some other specific examples of philosophical problems that deal with the nature or characteristics of certain entities. These questions though implicit in the ones just consider are reformulated in a manner to distinguish them from those already mentioned. To such questions we can cite the following examples; 'what is the nature of reality?' 'What is the nature of man and existence?' 'What are the basic characteristics of justice, duty, and moral obligation?', 'What are the essential characteristics of the laws of thought?' 'What is the nature of value?' etc. Since the first class of questions which the disciplines ask are factual questions, we cannot know whether a certain picture or work of art is beautiful or a certain line of action is right/just or whether it will rain tomorrow or without knowing what is meant by the supposed terms i.e. 'beauty', 'right', 'just', 'wrong', 'truth', 'causality' as employed in these senses respectively. Questions of this type that we have referred to as factual are the specific questions of our experience such that when the practitioners of the disciplines attempt to describe a given

situation, they take for granted that they know the definitions of the given terms or concepts used. Their business is not to engage in analysis. On the contrary, conceptual questions unlike the factual ones are very general and philosophical. Questions of this kind are not only questions of definitions or meaning but also of analysis. Thus, when a philosopher attempts an analysis of what signifies a given term which he clarifies by means of definitions, he is said to be involved in the "logical analysis of language and the clarification of the meaning of words and concepts" (Titus et al 11-12). In this sense, we can say that all philosophical problems of the second type are those concerning concept and meaning of the terms used. It is only when all the relevant terms are known and defined can answers to such philosophical questions make sense.

As regard the last sort of philosophical questions that have to do with the nature of certain entities, we are here concerned not only with the definition or analysis of terms but also with the objective or essential characteristics of the given entities. An investigation into the answering of such questions is not only an investigation into the meaning of words; it is also an investigation into the philosophical problems directly concerning the fundamental qualities of certain entities. For example, a great deal of the questions asked by the early Greek Milesian philosophers about the primary underlying substance/element or principle out of which the universe was made or about the nature of existence i.e. whether change or permanence is its basic characteristics are about questions not only concerning the meaning of the terms 'change', 'permanence', 'substance', 'principles', 'reality', 'existence', etc but also about the characteristics of the actual entity or entities denoted by these terms. Again, when medieval philosophers engage in controversies about the nature of man or when modern philosophers asked questions about the nature of reality or how physical objects can be known or when some contemporary philosophers disagreed especially in ethics concerning the nature of right and wrong, they are not only answering questions about the meaning of the terms 'man', 'objects, or things', 'right or wrong' but also about the characteristics or essence of man or whether physical objects exist in themselves or are caused by the ideas perceived in the mind? In each case, philosophers would not be able to determine the nature of the universe in terms of change or permanence without first knowing the meaning of the terms, 'change' or 'permanence'. In such circumstances, philosophers cannot determine the nature of man or whether objects exist as things in themselves or how to distinguish between right and wrong without first of all knowing the definitions or meaning of 'man', 'objects or things' or 'right and wrong' respectively. It is along this line of

reasoning that Minimah in a thought provoking article argues that all philosophical problems are concerned with meaning, if not directly then indirectly. This means that all philosophical problems not directly concerned with meaning are concerned with meaning indirectly (*Kiabara* 339).

Summary and Conclusion

In this paper, we have attempted to show in details the borderlines between philosophy and other disciplines. In focusing on the inquiry, we approached this task from the outset by outlining the actual characterization of the philosophical enterprise in terms of its nature, definition, scope and functions. In our illustration of the boundaries which philosophy shares with other disciplines, we have drawn a sharp line here to mean a clear statement of the angle of interest they take to the investigation of reality. A survey of the literatures in these areas readily showed that the scientists, sociologists, psychologists, the artists, the theologians etc presupposed a certain conception of what it is to investigate reality. All these compartmentalized disciplines as we have seen accentuate different perspectives based on the theoretical concerns and methodologies of their specific objectives. Being the 'mother of the disciplines' and the 'science of all sciences'; philosophy on the contrary, is comprehensively all embracing. Its comprehensiveness derived from its interest to attain a clear and precise knowledge of the whole of reality. What is more, it endeavors to relate and integrate the information which the various disciplines are able to discover in their attempts to study particular or well defined aspects of reality. As indicated, the most significant boundary in terms of the similarity that overlapped and considered relevant to philosophy and the disciplines is their emphasis on reality as reflected in language and meaning. This means that it is not only in other disciplines that the knowledge of terms, structures and uses of language (i.e. the problem of meaning) are dealt with but that this task is also vigorously pursued in philosophy where the insistence on clarity of expression is significant. By the 'everydayness' in the use of certain concepts, we become clearer about the way in which we think about the world. This is so because more than anything else philosophy in its search for ultimate explanation, ultimate foundations and ultimate reference points for meaning and knowledge for the sake of truth employs linguistic analysis as the method that is universally accepted by all philosophers. As we have seen, it is in this perspective that the whole notion of meaning and interpretation align with the thoughts of Wittgenstein who is perhaps one of the most notable exponents of this form of philosophizing.

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