

METAPHYSICS AND THE ONTOLOGY OF BEING AMIDST THE LOGICAL POSITIVISTS' CRITICISM

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Abstract

The ontological quest of what truly constitutes the nature of reality has been a major preoccupation of metaphysics from time immemorial. This is because metaphysics is a science of being. The paper states that the notion of being is surrounded by some conceptual issues like act and potency, cause and effect, essence and existence, substance and accident, time and space, and so on. All of these are said to be perennial problems in the history of philosophy.

The paper argues that the principles of metaphysics are different from the methods of the natural sciences reason being that the natural sciences have four characters i.e Specific, Public, Objective, and Impersonal. A close look at the four character of science shows that the natural sciences deal with the reality of the physical world whereas metaphysics adopts a more holistic approach to reality because it considers both the material and the non-material aspects of reality. This paper further argues that metaphysical postulations have lingered on in history and as such philosophers in the different epochs of philosophy have tried to proffer solutions to the problem of being. There is no doubt that while metaphysicians try to proffer solutions to the nature of being, logical positivists and other members of the Vienne circle are against metaphysical assumptions and postulations. They claim that metaphysical assertions are nonsensical and as such

should be committed to the flames because they contain sophistry and illusion. This paper concludes that despite these criticisms from the logical positivists, metaphysics as a science of being is very much relevant to humanity. The method to be adopted will be analytical, expository, and prescriptive.

Key Words: Being, Logical Positivism, Metaphysics, Natural Science,

Introduction

From time immemorial, issues relating to the realities of existence have been the main focus of man. This means that man tries to grapple with the ontology of what truly constitutes the existence of the universe. One important discipline which is used to determine the *basic substratum* of existence is the tools of philosophy.

Philosophy means man's quest for wisdom about nature itself thus William Aso sees philosophy as “man as the subject of philosophy has an unquenchable thirst for knowledge not only for empirical realities alone but also phenomenal realities and everything that concern human experience and the universe in general”.¹ Nature here is not just to be seen as that which appeals to the senses alone, but also, things that do not appeal to the senses. Now one major branch of philosophy that helps man to truly understand the workings of existence is metaphysics.

Metaphysics is a branch of philosophy that grew up with the quest to understand nature as it is in itself. Now, different philosophers from the classical age down to the age of enlightenment have postulated different theories to help in understanding the formulation of the things in existence. This is where metaphysics as a science of 'Being' emanated from. For instance, Heidegger sees metaphysics as an ontological inquiry into the “sein”, 'being' or 'to be'² Heidegger calls it an ontological inquiry into existence because ontology is a central branch of metaphysics that deals with the nature of beings, becoming, existence or reality. This is because everything, in reality, is known as being because 'Being is'. There is no doubt therefore that many philosophers have variant views on the notion of

being. While some hold that being is that which is verifiable to the senses, others hold that metaphysical realities (being) are not verifiable to the senses. This great divide about the notion of being has led to a thorough investigation into the conceptual analysis of the notion of being and the perennial problems that are attached to it.

Given the fact of these variant views, the question now is what truly constitutes the nature of metaphysics? Do beings exist? If they do, are they to be easily verified by the senses? Do they not appeal to the senses? Are beings both verifiable to the senses and at the same time not verifiable to the senses? Is metaphysics different from the principles of natural sciences?

The main aim of this work is to do an overview of the nature and content of metaphysics as a branch of philosophy vis-à-vis the Logical positivists' criticisms of metaphysical speculations. This will usher us into the analogy of being in which certain conceptual notions of being will be dealt with together with the perennial problems that are associated with the nature of being. The methods to be adopted will be expository, analytic, and speculative.

However, care must be taken not to see this work as fully expressive in content, but as that which will further spur many thinkers to research this area.

Meaning of Metaphysics

The term 'metaphysics' is derived from two Greek words *meta* meaning *after* and *phusis* meaning *physical*. Literarily, this means 'after the physica'. This goes to show that metaphysics deals with realities that are beyond the physical world. This concept is said to be derived from Andronicus of Rhodes who was arranging the works of Aristotle. It was reported that while he was arranging the works of Aristotle in Alexandria, he placed the work that Aristotle calls first philosophy after the ones on physics and gave them the title '*ta meta ta physica*' meaning 'after the physica'. The question now is why would Aristotle refer to metaphysics as the first philosophy? The answer is not far-fetched. He calls it the *first philosophy* because it is a discipline that deals with the first causes of all things. Thus, Ayo Fadahunsi sees "metaphysics as speculation not just concerning the particulars of our world, its kinds, and species, but rather the attempt

to find some first causes from which sprang the diversities of reality.³ Be that as it may, one thing that stands out in the etymological meaning of metaphysics is the fact that it deals with the totality of reality and its first causes thus Joseph Omoregbe defines it as “the branch of philosophy that studies the totality of being, that is, nature and structure of reality as a whole”⁴. One thing that stands out about this definition of Omoregbe is that metaphysics investigates reality as a whole and not just a part of it. It deals with both realities that apply to the senses are things that do not apply to the senses. This is against the backdrop of those who are of the view that metaphysics concern itself with extraterrestrial realities alone. Metaphysics is an interrogation of what is seen to what is unseen. J. Omoregbe argues thus:

... 'after physics' came to be understood as 'beyond physics', that is, beyond the physical world, and metaphysics came to be understood as the discipline dealing with realities beyond the physical work. This has been the popular understanding of the word down through the ages. But this popular understanding of the word is not quite accurate because it is not only realities that are beyond the physical world that metaphysics deals with. Rather, as a branch of philosophy, it is the study of the totality of being, that is, the nature and structure of reality as a whole.⁵

This holistic nature of reality is traced back to Aristotle's metaphysics where he refers to it as 'prime philosophy that examines both the material (celestial bodies) and spiritual (God and the celestial movers) divine realities.⁶ This idea about metaphysics further determines how scholars see the term metaphysics. For instance, Sylvester Enomah sees it as a branch of philosophy that studies and investigates the principles that pervade all reality.⁷ He also went further to state that metaphysics studies reality as a whole and not just a portion of it. This is because it extends to all reality both those perceptible to the senses which we come to the knowledge of through empirical sciences and empirical investigation and those realities that we cannot experience or know experientially.⁸ Pantaleon Iroegbu subscribes to this view when he states that “metaphysics involves

both the physical and the spiritual, the empirical and the supra-empirical. It concerns each being, all of being, and being in all.⁹ Here, there is an interface between empiricism and rationalism, between *a priori reasoning* and *aposterori reasoning*. All of these forms the basic fulcrum of metaphysics.

Pantaleon Iroegbu's *point de part* of metaphysics is to correct the somewhat misconception that metaphysics is a form of occultic discipline. He argues thus “ the layperson's conception of metaphysics is often limited to occultic. Many identify metaphysics with occultism: the exploitation of hidden powers in nature. This is a misconception of what metaphysics is. Occultism is not metaphysics, metaphysics is not occultism”¹⁰. This argument becomes necessary when one considers the myopic way by which some conceives of what metaphysics as a study of nature is all about.

This was what informs his definition of metaphysics as “ordered investigation into the inner side of existence”¹¹. He went further to scintillatingly state that “metaphysics unravels the most fundamental contents of being and beings ... it researches into the proxities of being, and the relationship among them”¹². It is this investigative research into reality as a whole that makes metaphysics not occultic premonstrations, but the discovery of the response to the questions of why things are the way they are.¹³

This integrative notion of metaphysics makes it very different from the methods of the natural sciences. This natural sciences are often referred to as 'pure science' when distinguishing them from applied science and social sciences. The natural sciences are different from the principles of metaphysics because they deal with an aspect of nature. That is, the aspect of nature that is verifiable to the senses.

This notion of the natural sciences is well-butressed in its four basic characteristics. Jack Aigbodioh gives the four basic characters that are solely exclusive of the natural sciences. They are specific, public, impersonal, and objective¹⁴. The natural sciences are said to be *specific* because they deal with particular observable or identifiable objects of this terrestrial world; it is said to be *public* in character because their methods and techniques as well as their products are exoteric rather than esoteric; it is said to be *impersonal* because it does not involve idiosyncratic beliefs, that is, beliefs or

ideals which result from a person's peculiar power of imagination; it is *objective* insofar as their conclusions (concepts, laws, and theories) are drawn directly from the hard and naked facts about the world of everyday perceptual experience.¹⁵

It becomes clear therefore that the methods of metaphysics are different from the methods of the natural sciences. This is not to say there are no areas of convergence in some aspects but the overall point of divergence shows that while metaphysics deals with the totality of reality; that is, an investigation into the material (empirical) and the spiritual (non-empirical) realities, the methods of sciences deal with realities that can be verifiable and validated utilizing the senses.

Conclusively, it suffices to say that metaphysics is known with variant nomenclatures. It is called *ontology* because it discourses being toward an ultimate unified report of reality. It is called *prime philosophy* or *first philosophy* because it searches for the first causes of all things; it is called *natural theology* in so far as it deals with the science of the divine, the primordial cause of all things, and other supra-sensible realities. All of these nomenclatures show that metaphysics deals with an investigation into *being qua being* and all that belongs to *being as being*.

Having stated this with all its clarity, there is a need to survey the notion of being as it constitutes the basic fulcrum of metaphysics.

Metaphysics as a Science of Being: The Analogy of Being

Metaphysics down the ages has been referred to as the science of being. The question that readily comes to mind is: what then is Being? J. Omoregbe says the question 'what is being' is the most fundamental question of philosophy; this is because it has been a problem in philosophy right from the pre-socratic period to our own day¹⁶. However, the notion of being can be something in reality whether seen or unseen. It can be concrete, empirical or meta-empirical. In fact, the totality of nature is known as being.

The term 'being' as present participle of the verb 'to be' means existing (existens, existere). This participle has come to be used as a noun, and as such it does not necessarily imply actual existence *hic et nunc*. It does imply some relation to actual existence; for we

designate as being (in the substantive sense) only whatever we conceive as existing or at least as capable of existing and it is from this participial sense, which implies actual existence, that the substantive sense has been derived¹⁷

The different philosophical epochs have helped to spell out the framework from which the notion of being can be accessed. For instance, in the ancient era, it is arguably believed that Parmenides was the first to busy himself with the notion of being. He concludes that being is eternal and unchanging. This is against the backdrop of Heraclitus who holds that being is something that is open to change.

Be that as it may, one will immediately conclude that from Parmenides, the things around us that change are not beings¹⁸.

Parmenides' philosophy truly influences that of Plato who holds that being is eternal and unchanging and as such anything, we see around us that changes is not being. This position of Plato means that he is against Heraclitus's theory of Flux¹⁹. However, it is important to note that despite the fact that Plato subscribed to Parmenides' thought does not mean he agrees with everything. He differed from Parmenides in the point of view that reality is not only one. This invariably means that Plato is not a monist²⁰ but more of a dualist as seen in his bifurcation of existence into *The Material World* and *The World of Form*. Being for Plato are many but not the things we see around us but the ones in the World of Form. Aristotle on his part holds that the object of metaphysics is 'being qua being'. This Being *qua* Being or Pure Being, Aristotle calls 'God' thereby making metaphysic theology²¹. This is further proof of the fact that metaphysics can also be called *natural theology*.

The middle age which was dominated by the era of the papacy tends to tailor things from the theological perspective. Thus, Thomas Aquinas a neo-Aristotelian, concurred with the fact that *being qua being* is God. He went further to state that God is being *per excellence* while other creatures are being in the analogical sense²² Dun Scotus while rejecting this analogical sense of Aristotle claims that being is indefinable because it is the simplest and the most all-embracing of all concepts. This means that for Dun Scotus creatures are being in the real sense of the word. Thus, one can say that infinite beings are beings in the same way as finite beings are²³. This view of Dun Scotus

is in tandem with William of Ockham who held on to the univocal notion of being.

In the modern era, the notion of being did not gain prominence as many scholars busy themselves talking about substance rather than being. The problem of being in this era began with Hegel who gave a dialectical approach to it. He contrasted being with non-being, as thesis and antithesis respectively²⁴. This dialectical approach between the thesis and anti-thesis is a synthesis. This resultant synthesis is *becoming*. Thus, in the Hegelian dialectic, being and non-being are “moments” in the process of becoming²⁵. Martin Heidegger was the one who showed more interest in the notion of being in the modern era in his work *Being and Time*. In this work, he distinguished between *being itself* and *individual beings*. For him, 'being itself' is the source of the beings of the 'individual beings' and it manifests itself in them²⁶. It is important to note that Heidegger did not identify any particular being with God as Aristotle and Aquinas did. For instance, you cannot call a chair or a man a being itself. Being itself goes beyond particular things, it is rather the ground of all things and the source from which all beings derive their being²⁷.

Jean-Paul Sartre who is also a seasoned existentialist differs from Heidegger when he holds that *being* is whatever *is* and not something hidden or mystical. In his major work, *Being and Nothingness*, he argues that the foundation of being is *nothingness*, for being emerged from nothing. He went further to distinguish between two kinds of being. They are: *being-for-itself* (*pour-soi*) and *being-in-itself* (*en-soi*). The former is a conscious being while the latter is an unconscious being. This notion of being is not in tandem with those who uphold the religious and mystical notion of being like that of Aquinas and Aristotle. His own is purely natural and atheistic in approach. However, Gabriel Marcel a Catholic existentialist revived the religious notion of being when he holds that being is a mystery and not a problem. For him, a mystery in which we are part of; a mystery in which we are involved and engulfed²⁸.

Given the historical excursus on the notion of being, one thing that stands out is that being is whatever is. As Pantaleon Iroegbu concludes, the notion of being is the *primum notum* (the first to be

known) and the *per se notum* (the most self-evident) reality of the human intellect²⁹. He says this because for him, whatever exists is being. This is because everything, in reality, is being. Daniel Sullivan's argument here becomes expedient.

The term 'being' is applied to everything that is or can be, even to possibilities, for whatever is not nothing, is being. (if we can't say 'being', we can only say 'nothing'). Being, then, is something that belongs to all things. Yet one being is not another being, nor one way of being another way of being. Things, in other words, not only agree in that they are all beings, but they also differ by their very being ... every being is unique, isolated, and separate from every other being; in a certain sense, every being is final and ultimate ... we are confronted with one more instance of the mystery of sameness and difference ... namely that being is common to everything that is, but at the same time things differ by their very being. We say that God is a being and that a stone is a being. Man is a being and a possibility is a being. But the being of God is infinite, and the being of a stone is finite. My being is actual but the being of my grandchildren is potential. They can all be called being in that they are all 'not nothing'. But they differ in the way they are 'not nothing'³⁰

The point of Daniel Sullivan is based on the fact that whatever is seen in reality is a being and since it is being it is not nothing. For that which is not nothing, is a being. However, in the notion of being, there is the reality of sameness and difference. This is because the way a stone is a being is different from the way God is a being. The way man is a being is different from the way a chair is a being. But one common thing is that they are all being yet in different degrees judging from the reality of act and potency.

Given this notion of being, there is a need to do a bifurcation of what being is all about. Pantaleon Iroegbu gave three kinds of Being.

They are: Real beings, Ideal Being and Logical beings. All of these three beings are a derivation of the different notions of beings by the earliest philosophers. For instance, the scholastics philosophers distinguished between *Necessary Beings* and *Contingent Beings*; the same is true of the bifurcation of Martin Heidegger's (being itself and Individual Beings) and Jean-Paul

Sartre's *Being-for itself* (pour-soir) and *Being-in-itself* (en-soir) as seen above, which most scholars have translated into *Transcendental Beings* and *Conceptual Beings*.

For Pantaleon Iroegbu, the *Real Being* is whatever is or that which can be independent of our knowledge of it. This real being according to him, can be actual and potential. It is actual if it exists *hic et nunc* and it is potential if it can, though it does not yet exist. Other features of the real being include: substantial and accidental; Necessary and Contingent, Finite and Infinite; absolute and relative, ontologically absolute being and logical absolute being³¹ The *ideal being*, refers to being in knowledge; that is, being as it is known. It is also called intentional being because it is the thought-presence or appropriation of the thing by the human mind in its collective consciousness and awareness. Lastly, The *Logical Beings*, are beings that exist only in the mind. They are a creation of thoughts and the fruit of the reflections, comparisons, relations, and extensions of Real and Ideal beings by the human mind. They have no external existence whatsoever. They are purely mental, logical, or thought beings.

Logical being has no *fundamentum in re* if it is a mere fabrication of the human mind, for instance, a square circle, but a logical being has a *fundamentum in re* if its conception is based on real or ideal being, though it does not exist.

More so, a significant part of being is in its basic conceptual principles. In other words, every being is said to be adjudged from the point of view of these conceptual principles and some perennial philosophical problems like Act and Potency, Essence and Existence, Substance and Accident, Cause and Effect, Space and Time, Appearance and Reality, Universal and Particular, Change and Permanence and so on. All of these will form the basis for the next discuss.

Some Basic Conceptual Principles of Being and their Perennial Metaphysical Problems

Having done an examination and investigation into the notion of being that is a subject matter of ontology and metaphysics, there is the need to do an exposition on how it can be applied to some conceptual principles that are proper to it. These principles are necessary because

before we do a proper study of being we must first consider its principles as Alvira holds “{these principles} are found in all creatures and enable us to acquire a deeper knowledge of being”³²

The first of these principles of being to be considered is Act and potency. It is believed that before any being is said to be in its complete state, it must have undergone some processes. While its complete state is known as *Act (actuality)*, the processes that led to its completion are known as *potency (potentiality)*. This knowledge of act and potency is premised on our idea of change, motion, and permanence. Act is any perfection of a subject while, potency is the capacity to have perfection.³³ More so, actuality according to Aristotle, is before potency.³⁴ The actual is always produced from the potential, the potential is always reduced to act by the actual, for that which is already in act, as man is produced by man.³⁵

Act and potency should be assessed from two points of view as they relate to being. First from the physical point of view and secondly, from the metaphysical point of view. From the physical viewpoint, Nkwain Sam says that act and potency form the elements that make change and motion possible in being more understandable. This is because an actual being cannot be at the same time potential and vice versa. Change is the transition between being in potentiality and being in actuality³⁶. From the metaphysical point of view, the doctrine of act and potency shows itself in all finite being so much so that potency after having been made actual continues to be a co-principle of its corresponding act. It, therefore, means that a particular being that has attained an act can also be a potency of something else. However, this is not so with the necessary being. The necessary being is the being that is always in act. Its actuality is not dependent or premised by any form of potentiality.

Another basic principle of being is essence and existence. Existence, on the one hand, is the state of being in virtue of which a being is present as an actuality and not merely as a possibility, distinct from the mind; and if it is a produced being, distinct from its producing cause.³⁷ resorting to the issue of acts and potency, Celestine's definition sees every existent being as already in actuality and not just a possible being this is because existence connotes concreteness.

Essence on the other hand is what a being is or what a thing is. In other words, it is what a thing is before it takes a concrete existence.

Pantaleon gave three (3) essential points on what essence is all about. For him, essence is quiddity, nature, and substance.³⁸ *Quiddity* means that the essence of a being is what defines a being in itself that makes it distinct from another being. It has to do with the *beingness* of a thing thus it answers the question: quid? (What?).

Nature as essence means that which brings about the peculiar character and structure of being. For instance, the nature of man is body and soul. *Substance* as essence is used to differentiate being from its accident. This brings about the form of being.

Here it is believed that every being exist and as such has its essence.

If being is whatever is, it means being is that which exists, and whatever exists must have an essence. The seeming interrelatedness between essence and existence has been a cause of concern among scholars from the classical age till this age. This is so because, in ancient times, the notion of essence and existence feature prominently most especially in the work of Plato and Aristotle.

While Plato on his part concludes that essence is the most perfect and stable object and to be found in the World of Form, Aristotle claims essence does not exist in a separate world as Plato claims; but essence is to be found in the sensible beings of this world, wherein they are said of having a concrete and singular mode of existence. In medieval times these views of Plato and Aristotle were absorbed by Aquinas and other Christian philosophers; where Aquinas holds that it is existence that actualizes essence. However, the Islamic thinkers who made contributions to this issue in the medieval era are Avicenna and Averroes. For Avicenna, he conceives existence as an accident since essence is a primacy.

Avicenna conceives of essence as independent of, and before existence. This is because while the essence is uncaused, existence is caused.³⁹ In the modern era, different existentialist philosophers like Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Monley Ponty, and a host of others lay primacy to existence over essence. For the existentialist, existence precedes essence. Jean-Paul Sartre conceives of this view from an atheistic perspective because for him, “there are no eternal essences,

presents as “ideas” in the mind of God, which precedes the existence of things”⁴⁰ this simply means that being is not created for a purpose. It has no fixed nature rather, it is determined by his own choice because it is precisely the way in which being exists and acts that expresses the essence of what the being is all about.⁴¹

There is no doubt that this view does not sit well with phenomenologists like Edmund Husserl in his eidetic science (the science of essence). This is because, for phenomenologists, essence precedes existence.

Now, it is important to note that the whole argument on essence and existence is for contingent beings alone and not for Necessary beings. Joseph Omoregbe argues thus:

This distinction between essence and existence applies only to contingent beings, and not to the necessary Being. In the necessary being essence and existence are identical, existence is part of his essence. Consequently, the Necessary Being cannot but exist since existence is part of his nature. Contingent beings do not have existence as part of their nature, it comes from outside them. Hence they owe their existence to another being outside them.⁴²

Be that as it may, one truth that stands out about the notion of being is a complementarity between essence and existence. They are basic conceptual issues of being. They are indeed inseparable. A being that exists has its respective essence. While essence makes existence what it is, existence is the cause of essence because existence makes essence real or exist concretely.

Another distinct conceptual issue is *cause* and *effect* or the principle of causality. Causality is a generic connection of phenomena through which one thing (the cause) under certain conditions gives rise to, and causes something else (the effect).⁴³ He went further to state that the essence of causality is the generation and determination of one phenomenon by another. This invariably means that for a being to exist, it must have been caused by something. It is so because nature abhors non-causality and vacuum. This means that in nature there is a continuity in the chain of productivity. This is the

foundation from which the notion of causality stands for “causality is defined as the act of bringing into reality what was not in reality”⁴⁴

The notion of causality in being will be discussed in Aristotle's four causes. Andrea Falcon says that the doctrine of the four causes is an indispensable tool for a successful investigation of the world around us.⁴⁵ The four causes are the *material cause*; which is the stuff from which a thing is made; the *formal cause*, which has to do with the shape or the form which a being takes; the *efficient cause* is the agent that is responsible for bringing a being into existence; and the *final cause*, which has to do with the purpose for which a thing is made. The account of the four causes is general in the sense that it applies to every being that requires an explanation.

The principle of causality holds that contingent beings are caused. The only being that is not caused is the Supreme Being. He is the uncaused cause. H. D. Guardeil in his assessment of Thomas Aquinas's philosophy puts it thus: “a cause is a principle of being ... everything except the Supreme Being depends on something not only for its being but also for its becoming. This something of whatever sort is a cause”⁴⁶. This point is further buttressed in the works of Aristotle and later adopted by Thomas Aquinas in his *Qui Que Viae* for proving the existence of God. In their thought, the Supreme Being is known to have caused every other being into existence but he is not caused thus he is referred to as the uncaused cause.

Other conceptual analysis of being Space and Time. It is believed that every being exist in space and time. This is highly attested to in Aristotle's metaphysics and physics. The notion of potency and act in being takes place in time for it is a matter of time before potency becomes act. However, the only being that transcends time and space is the Necessary Being which has the character of *immanence* and *transcendence* as part of its nature. The question that readily comes to mind here is the notion of change. Do beings change or are permanent? This contention featured in the early history of philosophy in the work of Heraclitus and Parmenides. While Heraclitus holds that beings change, Parmenides holds that beings do not change. According to him (Parmenides), nothing goes out of being and nothing comes into being. Being is one and eternal. For him, what we call a change in being is due to the deformity of sense

perception for the senses cannot give us true knowledge. The likes of Plato and Rene Descartes are a proponent of the failures of sensual knowledge. For them, the best that the senses can offer in being is mere appearance and not reality. This is because appearance can deceive us.

Conclusively, it is important to note that every being has the reality of substance. This substance is said to exist. The substance of being constitute the nature or essence of a particular being as distinct from other beings.

Having done an examination of metaphysics as the science of being together with the analogy of being and its conceptual framework, can one say metaphysics is relevant to humanity? Are there people or schools of thought that are opposed to metaphysical methodology? Now an investigation into these questions becomes expedient.

The Logical Positivists' Criticisms of Metaphysics Vis-a Vis the Relevance of Metaphysics to Humanity

Metaphysics as a branch of philosophy has been a subject of attack by many logical positivists who are members of the Vienne circle.

The members of the Vienne circle are a group of early 20th-century philosophers who sought to reconceptualize empiricism utilizing their interpretation of reality⁴⁷. Their radically anti-metaphysical stance was supported by an empiricist criterion of meaningfulness where statements that are to be considered meaningful are those that are mathematical in nature. Scholars like Moritz Schlick, David Hume, Rudolf Carnap, A. J. Ayer, and a host of others are a proponent of this view. They disregard every religious and metaphysical concept that does not fall within the ambiance of the sciences. Concepts like God, spirit, soul, and so on are considered meaningless. A. J. Ayer who is one of the leading members of this group is quoted to say:

The mention of God brings us to the question of the possibility of religious knowledge. We shall see that this possibility has already been ruled out by our treatment of metaphysics ... for to say that God exists, is to make a metaphysical utterance that cannot be

either true or false. And by the same criterion, no sentence which purports to describe the nature of the transcendent God can possess any literal significance ... All utterances about the nature of God are nonsensical⁴⁸

Ayer like every other logical positivist sees a talk about God and other metaphysical realities as nonsensical reasons being that they cannot be verifiable by scientific assumptions. He even went further to deny the nature of the soul because it can also not be verified when he says “to say that there is something imperceptible inside a man, which is his soul or his real self, ... is to make a metaphysical assertion which has no more factual content than the assertion that there is a transcendent god”⁴⁹. David Hume holds that every metaphysical content should be thrown into the wind for they contain nothing but sophistry and illusion. Added to this, there are some empiricists and rationalists who see scholastic metaphysics as abstract and mere jargon because it deals with realities that cannot be verified. This is almost in tandem with *Ockham Razor* of William Ockham who holds that reality should not be multiplied unnecessarily. Why make a bifurcation of reality into a complex entity when there is a verifiable way to explain the nature of existence? With all of these postulations, can one still say metaphysics as a science of being is relevant to humanity?

The relevance of metaphysics cannot be over-emphasized. It is relevant in some way in that it helps humanity to understand reality better. This is evident in the different sub-branches that have emanated from it. For instance cosmology, anthropology, natural philosophy, and philosophy of mind. All of these have helped man to understand the world and all it contains. It is said that metaphysics helps scientists in the postulation of laws and theories about nature.

This is because while scientists rely on empirical observations to understand reality, metaphysicians employ the use of intelligent reasoning to help make sense of scientific theories. Ayo Fadahunsi captures this clearly when he says “metaphysics deserves a credit for its high sense of reasoning without which no inquiry can

be made into any theory because looking into a theory requires a deep respect for reasoning”.⁵⁰

Giving the fact that science makes use of an aspect of reality means that existence in all its wholeness cannot be grasped by scientific discovery alone. To understand the totality of being, certain metaphysical methods need to be adopted. For instance, it is through the help of the metaphysical method that different conceptual issues about being were considered. Concepts like act and potency, essence and existence, substance and accident, space and time, and the like. All of these issues help in understanding the *nitty gritty* of being and existence alike.

Metaphysics helps in the understanding of religious concepts like God, angels, spirit, and soul. It is a proper understanding of these concepts that human conduct is well-formed; for the man who has no touch of metaphysics goes through life imprisoned with prejudices

From the political point of view, one must not rule out the importance of metaphysics in the formulation of policies. This is because the principle of metaphysics emphasizes the integrity of humanity over racial discrimination and ethnocentric bias. In other words, laws will be made to benefit humanity and not party members only or people from the same race or tribes. The benefit of metaphysics is also seen in the different areas of the social and natural sciences for they depend on metaphysical speculations to bring about their laws and theories.

To put the value or relevance of metaphysics into perspective, Chulor C. Leo & Apebende S. Atah Citing Henry Koren outlines some importance or value of metaphysics. This outline will be summarized accordingly. For him, metaphysics is valuable because it is a speculative science. this is because it teaches us how to do certain things. After all, every man desires to know. It is said to have absolute value because it deals with being and all its components. It is said to render secure the ultimate foundations of the sciences because every other science depends on it to make useful postulations; it helps to examine and analyze general principles because it deals with the totality of existence and not just an aspect of existence; it is important because it helps in making a balance on the different norms of life.⁵¹

Conclusion

In this work, we have been able to establish that metaphysics is a branch of philosophy that studies the totality of reality. This was further buttressed on the ground that metaphysics is a study of being.

There is no doubt therefore that the nature of being is surrounded by some basic conceptual issues like act and potency, essence and existence, cause and effect, and the like. Given that the principles of metaphysics have been criticized over time yet its invaluable nature to humanity cannot be sidelined since many sciences depend on it for their postulations.

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