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Understanding the Nature and Branches of Philosophy

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Abstract

Philosophy presents different pictures to different persons. For some, it is another word for mysticism, of which its subject matter is a particular preserve for the initiates. Others, perhaps those of scholarly extraction, see philosophy as a technical name for the science of reality. For them, philosophy has its material object as all things, its formal object (the ultimate causes) and a method. In a rather loose sense of the word, philosophy could be defined as an attitude to life; a person's fundamental attitude towards human life and destiny. Hence, the subject area of philosophy is of interest to the untutored, the scholar and the society at large. This work makes an exhaustive exposition of the nature, scope and division of philosophy as a course of study. It demonstrates that philosophy is a science in which natural reason seeks to understand all things by knowledge of their first causes. Further, it considers all the branches of philosophy from the perspective of their competence and formal object. On the one hand, this article demystifies philosophy by disclosing the fact that it considers all things by the aid of natural reason. On the other hand, it provides the much needed resume of the rather omnibus subject area of philosophy. The research method employed is particularly analysis of concepts and synthesis of others to achieve interpretation.

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Introduction

Notice that it is possible in a very general sense to regard all disciplines or course areas as branches of philosophy. This is arguable because all knowledge areas are seeking for various answers to the question of reality and its sundry manifestations. Little wonder most ancient philosophers were admirably into all things as if they know everything. Thales for one was a philosopher, a mathematician, a physicist, a meteorologist and an economist, to be conservative with qualifications.¹ Same can be said of Plato and Aristotle, indeed of all philosophers. Hence, at the height of every academic engagement regardless of which course area, a person is honoured and decorated with a Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy). Nevertheless, this cannot be pressed so far as a method of classification, since most knowledge areas have gained independence by developing specialized methods and approaches. Many possibilities are therefore open for the construction or determination of what may constitute the branches of philosophy today. Indeed, not a few scholars have followed some precisely peculiar schedules. For instance, William Wallace has pioneered a double division into systematic and historical philosophy. Here, historical philosophy is further divided into basic and special disciplines. What is more? The history of philosophy approach contemplates some fourfold-branches into: ancient philosophy, medieval philosophy, modern philosophy and contemporary philosophy. In this way, branches are taken to mean, the various orientation of thought as determined by epochal contexts. It is yet not uncommon neither is it unreasonable to find thinkers who prefer, appreciate and therefore discuss the branches of philosophy according to the varying cultural and geographical divides. Here we meet with such divisions into: Western Philosophy, African Philosophy, Asian Philosophy and perhaps Indian and American Philosophies. The ideal here is to construe the branches as to reflect the thought either originating in, generated from or concerning a cultural people or their circumstances whether the reflections are made by the indigenous peoples or not. Something similar to this is the old but fashionable division of philosophy into Oriental and Occidental Philosophy.

However, in this essay, we undertake to introduce the beginner to the more acceptable, perhaps most popular, classical and perennial schema championed by Aristotle, Aquinas and Wolf. This approach has delineated three distinctive departments out of philosophy namely:

¹ S.E., Stumpf, *Philosophy, History and Problems*, Fourth Edition, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1971, p.5.

Logic (Propaedeutic science),
Theoretical or Speculative philosophy and
Practical philosophy.

This approach therefore considers three major branches of philosophy:

- If it concerns method or analytical tool of inquiry it is Logic
- If it concerns day-to-day experiences and decision-oriented engagements it is broadly called Practical Philosophy.
- If it concerns subtle underlying principles and non-practical issues (i.e. how and why of things) it is Speculative or Theoretical philosophy. Then, of the Speculative and the Practical:
 - If it answers the question “What is?” It is Metaphysics.
 - If it answers the question “How do we know? What are the sources of our knowledge?” then it is Epistemology or Gnoseology (Theory of Knowledge)
 - If it answers the question “What ought I to do?” It is Ethics.
 - If it answers the question “What am I” it is Philosophical Anthropology.
 - If it answers the question of reality from the aspect of God, it is Theology.
 - If it answers the question of the universe as an orderly creation, it is cosmology.
 - If it answers the question of the nature of the beautiful, it is Aesthetic.
 - If it answers the question of human conduct within an organized community, it is political philosophy.

In what follows we shall attempt to introduce these branches seriatim, to the beginner. After this, a further attempt will be made to discuss what has been called by Maurice Makumba Philosophy in learning today.² Here such disciplines as: Philosophy of Education, of Science, of History, of Politics, of Law, etc., will be highlighted.

An Excursus into the Branches:

Logic

Man is naturally ordered to correct thinking (spontaneous logic), yet he is susceptible to error. Because of this exigency of error, he needs Scientific Logic as a tool for evaluating his thought processes in difficult circumstances against error. As a matter of fact, everything man does consciously comes by identifying a problem, assessing alternatives available as solutions. This demonstration is called a logical process. Since this process is involved in rather every human act, logic is the most fundamental science of clear thinking; it is the basic apparatus for all kind of reasoning. Hence, in a very

² M.M., Makumba *Introduction to Philosophy*, Pauline’s Publications Africa, Kenya, 2005, p.56.

common parlance, “logic is often used as a synonym to reasoning or argument.”³ However, this kind of usage is avoided in philosophical contexts. While Philosophy concerns itself with reflection and indeed thinking, logic is that branch of philosophy that considers the nature of thinking itself and not in its relation to any object at all. It deals with the type of thinking called reasoning and in this capacity; it looks at the relationship between ideas themselves which can be found in similar way and sense in all reasonable men. Simply put, it is both an art of sound discourse and a science of the rules (second intentions) of such sound discourse.⁴

A number of disciplines appear on the face of it to have similar or related object with logic but not. While psychology considers thinking as an attribute of a subject out there with respect to learning, remembering, day dreaming,⁵ etc, logic studies thought contents in themselves, “according to their mutually necessary relationships i.e. logical laws.”⁶ Through the works of some modern thinkers, logic has appeared to dovetail into Epistemology and Ontology. While Kant’s transcendental logic is a special form of theory of knowledge, Hegel finds that the content of thought and the object of thought are one and the same thing. Hence “logic must consequently be also ontology.”⁷ Yet epistemology and ontology does not coincide with logic in certain considerations. While Epistemology studies the nature of knowledge understood as correspondence of mind to reality, logic focuses on the condition that must be met before any valid reasoning process is realized. Metaphysics or Ontology deals with real being outside the mind of the knower while logic’s proper object are propositional – being as given in reasoning. However, logic has a firm foundation on the metaphysical principle of non-contradiction otherwise the relations it establishes in the mind will contradict one another.⁸

³ T. Mautner (ed.) *The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*, Penguin Books, London, 2000, p.323.

⁴ A. W., Wallace *The Elements of Philosophy*, Alba house Pub., New York, 19977, p.13.

⁵ R Popkin, and A., Stroll, *Philosophy Made Simple*, Double day Pub., New York, 1993, p.237.

⁶ W., Bugger “Logic” in K. Barker, (ed) *Philosophical Dictionary*, Gonzanga university Press, Washington, 1972, p. 227.

⁷ Ibid. p.228.

⁸ M.M., Makumba op. cit. p.40.

Precisely because logic qua logic considers the three acts of the mind *viz*: simple apprehension, judgment and reasoning, we arrive at three-fold division of logic into:

1. Logic of concept or term: Here rules of thought appertaining to objects at the level of first encounter with the mind are studied. This includes the nature of species and definition of terms (genus and specific difference).
2. Logic of proposition – Here the possible relationships and ordering of objects to one another on the level of judgment are studied. Here we engaged with subject and predicate analysis.
3. Logic of Argument – Here the relationships and ordering of objects to one another at the level of reasoning are studied. The field includes syllogisms and middle terms. With respect to the above division, some scholars frequently identify four parts in logic.⁹
 - i. analysis of concepts (work)
 - ii. The judgment (proposition)
 - iii. The inference
 - iv. The nature of induction and formation of concepts in physical and human science.

Usually, philosophy of science, which deals with the process of knowing at the scientific level, is taken to be this fourth part of logic. It “tries to determine the value and significance of the principles and procedures of investigation, of explanation and of systematization involved in the various sciences.”¹⁰ By reference to another consideration, logic has been divided into

1. Formal logic
2. Material logic.

Formal logic otherwise called pure logic is logic in the strictest sense of the word. It looks only at the correctness or logical consistency of thinking. On the other hand, Material logic studies thinking according to their relationship to the object they represent. What this means is that it considers correspondence to reality. According to Wallace, formal logic studies discourse to see whether it is valid or not, while material logic studies discourse assumed to be valid to see what requirements it must fulfil to achieve a determinate degree of scientific force.¹¹ It grapples with the

⁹ W., Bugger “Logic”, in Barker K., op. cit. p.228.

¹⁰ Lous De Raemacker, *Introduction to Philosophy*, trans, Harry Mc. Neill, Joseph F. Wagner inc. 1950, p.65.

¹¹ A.W., Wallace op.cit. p.14.

philosophical problems taken up in the logic as the universal, abstraction and induction.

Traditionally, Aristotelian logic is divided into deductive and inductive logic whereas deductive logic deals with reasoning that attempt to establish conclusive inferences, inductive logic deals with rules that attempt to establish probable inferences. In deductive logic, if the reasons offered for the conclusions are true, then the conclusion cannot be false. But if the reasons offered for the conclusion in an inductive logic are true, only the probability of the conclusion can be guaranteed. While in deductive logic inference is made from the general to the particular, in inductive logic it is otherwise.

Today it is fashionable to distinguish between classical or traditional logic and Modern, Symbolic or Mathematical logic. The former pioneered by Aristotle progresses by syllogisms i.e. premises and conclusions, and is concerned with rules of reasoning. Aristotelian logic dominated the subject until the 19th century and it has “become increasingly recognized in the 20th century that fine work was done within that tradition.”¹² However, syllogistic reasoning “is now generally regarded as a limited special case of the forms of reasoning that can be represented within the propositional and predicate calculus. These form the heart of Modern logic.”¹³ At a superficial level the characteristic feature of modern logic is the use of a symbolic notation resembling Algebra. But on a deeper level, its distinctive feature is its axiomatic structure whose validity is purely formal that is, independent of any content to which it may apply. Notice that “logic at this symbolic sense can be a tool of reasoning but not a rule of reasoning.”¹⁴ According to Blackburn, modern logic is called mathematical logic for two reasons: first, the logic itself is an object of mathematical study, but secondly, the forms introduced by Frege provided a language capable of representing all mathematical reasoning.” This was something traditional logic had been quite incapable of tackling.¹⁵ The development of symbolic logic can be traced to Leibniz, A. de Morgan, S. Boole, Frege, etc.

Contemporary scholarship especially among Africans has tended to divide logic into Western logic and African logic. Here while the entire corpus of

¹² M.M., Makumba op.cit. p.42.

¹³ S., Blackburn *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1994, p.221.

¹⁴ E., Mackinnon “Symbolic Logic” in K. Baker, (ed). Op.cit. p. 406-407.

¹⁵ S., Blackburn op.cit. p.221.

the received tradition of classical and modern logic will be properly called Western, African logic is presented to be constituted by completely different axioms and structure. A lot many scholars have debunked this development to the effect that it will mean creating a substantial difference between the African man and Western man.

Thus, in its essence, logic is only a tool for acquisition of knowledge – Propaedeutic science. All branches of knowledge, not just philosophy, need logic so as to ensure coherent and orderly thinking. Philosophy must therefore begin with logic and in this way; the absurdity of seeking at the same time knowledge and the method of attaining it will be avoided.¹⁶

Theoretical or Speculative Philosophy

Speculative philosophy refers to those branches of philosophy which do not simply grapple with the data of experience but actively penetrate them with proper metaphysical insight all the way to their ultimate roots. These make use of essential knowledge, analysis, a priori synthesis and deduction. They include: metaphysics, theodicy, philosophy of nature (cosmology) and philosophy of living beings.

Metaphysics

Metaphysics was the name given by Andronicus of Rhodes the first editor of the works of Aristotle to denote the book which handle matters that are placed after and beyond the works of physics. Aristotle himself called metaphysics the “first philosophy”. Indeed, it is the branch of philosophy responsible for the study of existence. It attempts an answer to the question “What is?” It studies everything that exists not excluding the nature of existence itself. It pronounces on the reality or illusoriness of the world in which we live and even beyond. Some of the questions which metaphysics ask include: “What are basic facts of reality? What principles are true of everything that exists? What is the basic substance of material of the universe? Must there exist anything at all?”¹⁷

Metaphysics or Ontology, as Christian Wolff called it, is philosophy in the strictest sense of the word. “It seeks the most intimate aspect of reality (ens), its being, seeking its ultimate causes in the most absolute sense. It therefore investigates into the nature, constitution and structure of being in general.”¹⁸

¹⁶ Aristotles, *Metaphysics*, 11, 995, 12.

¹⁷ A.O., Onigbinde *What is Philosophy?* Frontlint Resources, Ibadan, 1999, p.32.

¹⁸ M.M., Makumba op.cit. p.42-43.

The material object of metaphysics is “all things” and its formal object is the “being of things” as such. The study of metaphysics would lead to an understanding of the ultimate reality which lies behind that which we confront in sensory experience. Such an understanding is not itself based on sensory experience, but on insight or rational analysis. Hence Metaphysics “*ta meta ta physika*”, is thus an inquiry into that which lies beyond nature and transcends the limit of ordinary knowledge and experience.”¹⁹ In its material details metaphysics studies basic aspects of being at the level of composition and internal structure – act of being and essence, substance and accident, act and potency, matter and form and causality. Metaphysics also studies those characteristics that are present in every being in so far as it is, namely, unity, truth, goodness and beauty. It investigates and applies the first principles of being (non-contradiction, excluded middle and identity). These principles concern metaphysics because they are judgments on reality. They express the basic truth that reality cannot be self contradictory.²⁰

According to Christian Wolff, metaphysics have three major parts: Ontology (the general doctrine of being and existence and attributes), rational cosmology (the doctrine of the world), and rational psychology (the doctrine of the existence and attributes of the soul).

Natural Theology (Philosophy of God)

This branch of philosophy has also been referred to as Theodicy. It is that part of metaphysics which investigates the existent under the aspect of its ultimate principle – a principle which escapes sense perception. God is the object of its study with reference to his existence, essence and activity.²¹ The movement of reason here is from the known to the unknown. In this case it is from creatures considered as effects to their first cause in God. It is important to underscore that philosophy of God cannot guarantee the knowledge of God as He is in Himself. At best it provides the knowledge of God in so far as he is accessible to reason. What this means is that what philosophy of God is able to provide is analogical as against an adequate or supernatural knowledge of God.²² The possibility of philosophy of God is anchored on the fact that man can by the light of reason know with certainty the existence of God and can make conceptual statements that are valid about his being.

¹⁹ T., Mautner (ed), op.cit., p.351.

²⁰ M.M., Makumba op.cit., p. 43-44.

²¹ W., Brugger “Theology” in K., Baker op.cit., p.414.

²² S., Blackburn op.cit., p.256.

Notice that “two basic principles are operative in every judgment of natural theology: that which belongs to God, though in his own way”. Secondly, “that which belongs to a contingent existence as contingency must necessarily be denied of God.”²³ Some of the themes engaged in the philosophy of God are: proof of God’s existence, knowability of God, creation, providence and governance of God and the problem of evil.

Cosmology (Philosophy of Nature)

Philosophy of nature is about the “the study of the universe as an orderly creation and of the causes that operate in the world of space and time.” It presumes that “the world was made according to an all-wise plan and is being directed by an infinite mind”²⁴ Thus, it refers to a philosophical discipline that deals with the general features of the physical universe which can be known before experience. Accordingly, cosmology is one of the three branches of what Wolf called special metaphysics. As a distinctive course area, “it signifies both the existence of an ordered universe and the methodological pursuit of that order. It investigates into the nature, structure and origin of the universe in its entirety. Philosophy of nature engages those aspects of material beings which are most permanent and most indicative of their nature. Its material object is the entire universe – world of material things and energies. For its formal object, it looks at the changeability of mobile beings that is, beings as subject to becoming.”²⁵ The perennial problems of philosophy of nature are those of (i) one and many (ii) being and becoming. It investigates into such subordinate themes as hylemorphism, the principle of individuation, time, relativity, motion quality, quantity and other categories. In his short essay on “Natural Philosophy,” Nikolaus Junk summarized cosmology as “that part of philosophy which has as its object living and non-living nature. Its purpose is to explain the phenomena of nature from the aspect of their existence and to trace them back to the conditions of their possibility.” As a branch of applied metaphysics, its purpose is to arrive at concepts which give an answer to the question about the natures of things and which show the proper relationship “between natural reality, man and whole reality, including the Absolute.”²⁶

Epistemology

²³ W., Brugger “Theology” in K., Baker op.cit., p.414.

²⁴ J.A., Hardon, *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, Robert Hale Pub., London, 1970, p.134.

²⁵ M.M., Makumba, op.cit p.48.

²⁶ J., Nikolaus “Natural Philosophy” in K., Baker, (ed) op.cit., p.269-270.

This is the branch of philosophy that studies our method of acquiring knowledge, and indeed the nature and possibility of human knowledge. It is otherwise called theory of knowledge for it answers the question “How do we know?” Epistemology as it were investigates the relationship between the knowing mind and the object of knowledge. It wants to establish how our minds are related to reality, and whether their relationships are valid or invalid. In its universe of discourse, it grapples with the perennial problem of the scope and limits of human knowledge and with how it is acquired and possessed. More specifically, it encompasses the nature of concepts, formation of such concepts, the validity of sense impressions, perception, memory, proof, evidence, belief and certainty of human knowledge.²⁷ Quite a number of authors have preferred to designate the theory of knowledge as a branch of metaphysics specialized on knowledge and its problems. Their reason is that “the study of knowing cannot be divorced from the study of being, and thus that epistemology is at ground, a metaphysical discipline, a very convenient way of developing a metaphysics of knowledge is to ask the following questions: (i) what is it? This calls to question the nature (ii) what are its properties? This puts to perspective, truth and falsity and (iii) why does it have these properties? Here we come face to face with the nature of evidence and the certitude it engenders.²⁸ Cumulatively, whether it is epistemology or Gnoseology or criteriology or theory of knowledge as it is variously called, it covers such fronts of inquiries as belief and knowledge: theories of knowledge, empiricism, rationalism, subjectivism, historicism, pragmatism, scepticism, definitions, etc. It asks such questions as:

- (i) What is knowledge?
- (ii) Under what conditions are we justified in stating that we know something to be the case, either certainly or probably?
- (iii) How can we describe, clarify, and define the ways of acquiring knowledge?
- (iv) How can we describe, clarify and define kinds of knowledge?²⁹

Asked to state why epistemology is so important, one would say that “the degree to which our theory of knowledge is correct is the degree to which we could understand reality, and the degree to which we could use that knowledge to promote our lives and goals. Flaws in criteriology will make it difficult to achieve anything or certain things. Some elements of a proper epistemology include the following: that our senses are valid and exclusive

²⁷ Cf. T., Mautner op.cit., p. 174.

²⁸ W.A., Wallace op.cit., p. 37.

²⁹ *Elements of Theory of Knowledge*, Auto-century pub: Enugu, 1993, p.3.

source of information about the world; that reason is our method of gaining knowledge and acquiring understanding; that Logic is our method of maintaining consistency in knowledge.

Philosophical Anthropology (Philosophy of Man)

Etymologically, anthropology is a derivative from Greek ‘anthropos’ (man) and ‘logos’ (study). Thus, it is the science of man. At first, it was limited to scientific study of man, which investigates man in his characteristics by scientific methods. In recent years philosophical anthropology has defined and decisively asserted itself as a distinctive course of study. Recent scholarship is, therefore, reluctant to still include it as a branch of philosophy arguing that it has gained independence. Of those who still include it, they do so either under the heading *philosophy of living beings* or discuss man under *philosophy of nature*. However, the point is that philosophical anthropology raises core metaphysical questions about man which questions can only be raised or answered by philosophy. Such questions as what is man? Or what constitutes the being of man? What is man for? etc, are at the heart of philosophical anthropology. Philosophical anthropology in its project studies man as he is in his action (phenomenology) and as he is in himself (metaphysics). This marks out the scope which it covers. Hence “from the perspective of human action, it investigates such things as human life, knowledge, the appetite, will, freedom, passions, work and technology.”

Metaphysically, it considers issues like “the human body and its functions, the problem of self transcendence and man’s spirituality, the body-soul relationship, personality and individuality.”³⁰ The study of this branch of philosophy is very important because all that man does and how he goes about them depends on his ideal about himself. Little wonder Torre observed that “the metaphysics of the good of man (ethics) follows from the metaphysics of man.”³¹ Philosophical anthropology is all the more necessary because it provides the needed panacea to the gnawing anxiety in man to have the knowledge of himself with respect to origin, end and value. It provides proper directive for culture, religion and morality as well as providing a counter point to the philosophical currents that work to destroy man. This it does by emphasizing man’s transcendence, spirituality and survival beyond the grave.

³⁰ M. Joseph de Torre, *Christian Philosophy*, Vera- Reyes, Inc: Philippines, 1980, p.159.

³¹ M.M., Makumba op.cit. p. 53.

Practical Philosophy (Axiology: Philosophy of Values)

The designation practical philosophy on the face of it, gives the impression that it is possible to reduce philosophy to mere activity as in doing or without theoretical engagement. No, the real sense would be to talk of the philosophy of the practical and this retains the speculative method, proper to philosophy. Indeed, whenever knowledge is employed to direct conduct, action or doing it is said to have been ordained to a practical end. This practical end too has serious value orientation. Ethics and philosophy of Arts belong to this category. Some authors add to this group, political philosophy. The point is that practical philosophies properly called treat human activity that is the practical order with a view to knowing them philosophically.

Ethics (Moral Philosophy)

This is the science that aims at procuring the unqualified or ultimate good of man. It critically investigates moral norms, virtuous acts, human conscience and acts in general. In investigating the above moral facts, it considers the question of the existence, their possibility and meaning so as to arrive at metaphysics of morality. Notice that its principal orientation and commitment is to explain the morally good and that which is proper to it for instance the sense of duty and obligation. Human acts are the material object of ethics. These are acts which man undertakes from total awareness, willing and deliberation. On the other hand, the formal object of ethics is the relation of these human acts to the final end of man.³² Suffice it to observe, as arising from the foregone that the subject matter of ethics is voluntary human conduct which includes both actions and omissions. It has also been argued that within the scope of ethics are somewhat involuntary activities that involve minimal degrees of reflective approval of the individual. In his elements of philosophy, Wallace summarily observed that “what is aimed at in ethics is a reflective, well considered and reasonable set of conclusions concerning the kinds of voluntary activities that may be judged good or suitable (or evil and unsuitable) for a human agent in the context of man’s life as a whole including his relations to other beings whom his actions influence in some significant way. It also includes the relation of human actions to some overall goal of living...”³³ There are various ways in which people have tried to divide or classify ethics. But the most popular is the division into (i) Individual Ethics and (ii) Social Ethics. While the former

³² M. Joseph de Torre, op.cit. p. 159,

³³ M.M. Makumba op.cit. p. 55.

applies to a person's moral life in relation to his last end, the latter applies to an individual's relationship with others in the society.

Aesthetics (Philosophy of Arts)

Aesthetics is derived from the Greek 'aisthesis' which means 'sense perception'. It therefore primarily designates the science of sense perception in contrast to the science of spiritual knowing. The word aesthetics as used for a science was coined by Alexander Baumgarten 1750. Put in another way, aesthetics is the philosophical study of the beautiful and fine arts. It studies feelings, concepts and judgments arising from our appreciation of the arts or of the wider class of objects considered moving or beautiful or sublime.³⁴ Some of the questions which philosophy of arts poses include: What is a work of art? What makes a work of art successful? Can Art be a vehicle of truth? Does art work by expressing the feelings of the artist, communicating feelings, arousing feelings or symbolizing feelings? What is the difference between understanding a work of art and failing to do so? How is it that we take aesthetic pleasure in surprising things: tragedies or terrifying natural scenes? Why can things of very different categories equally seem beautiful? Does the perception of beauty have connections with moral virtues and with seeing something universal or essential and is the importance of aesthetic education and practice associated with this? What is the role of imagination in the production or appreciation of art? etc.³⁵ What is more? Philosophy of arts asks the above questions with total regard to liberal and servile on the one hand, and useful and fine arts³⁶ on the other hand. Hence, while its

³⁴ W.A. Wallace op.cit. pp. 149-150.

³⁵ S., Bkckburn op.cit. p. 8.

³⁶ M.M. Makumba op.cit. pp. 55-56 (see from the point of view of work, art can be divided into liberal and servile, the former being an immanent activity whose object is immaterial and is found primarily in the mind or imagination of the artist. The latter on the other hand is the result of bodily effort by its maker. From the point of view of purpose, a distinction can be made between useful and fine arts. Useful art produces things to be enjoyed for some other end (also called performing arts: music, drama and dance), while fine art produces objects that are enjoyed for their own sake (also called visual arts: painting, sculpture etc.). In fine art mimesis (imitation) is the immediate end sought and it is not a means to something else. Static objects are created, whose principal value is aesthetic quality. The end product of the useful or performing arts is not a static object but the performance of some kind by one or more people (Cf. Wallace W.A., *The Elements of Philosophy*, New York, Alba House, 1997, pp. 57-58) also Halverson,

material object is liberal, servile and useful arts, its formal object are about expounding the essence of the beautiful in general and in particular from its foundation in existence. It must shed light on the nature of the beautiful experience in its two forms of creative artist and understanding admirer. By considering the nature of the beautiful per se (aesthetic value) it does its ontological task and by assessing the experience of the artist and the admirer (aesthetic evaluation) it does its anthropological and existential task.³⁷ Philosophy of arts is important in its promotion of aesthetic attitude that is “the attitude of detached and disinterested, but engaged contemplation often supposed to be appropriate to understanding the aesthetic value of a work of art.”³⁸ Figures like Plato, Aristotle, Augustine (in the age of the fathers) and St. Thomas (in Middle Ages) did great works in the field of Aesthetics.

Political Philosophy

Man is a political animal “animal politicum.” Hence, political philosophy is that branch of philosophy which evaluates the values which man expects in and/or brings into his political engagement. In political philosophy, studies generally focus on human conduct within an organized human community. It asks and attempts answers to such questions that concern the relationships of individuals to the requirements of community existence. Some of the core questions include: What are the correct means of acquiring authority to issue orders to others? What should be the basic constituents of legal system? What is the standard of political or social justice? Under what conditions are laws open to justified violations? Do principles of community conduct vary from culture to culture? Is punishment justified? etc.³⁹ Notice that in engaging all the above logical geography, political philosophy has been accused to the effect that it lacks a distinctive subject matter. When it describes past and present socio-political organizations it repeats the project of anthropology, sociology, economics and law, etc. On the other hand, when it evaluates those organizations, it repeats the project of ethics. It appears political philosophy is a convenient shorthand to the concerns of the above fields.

However, because it does a dual work of describing and at the same time evaluating its descriptions, it immediately assumes a distinctive office away

William H., *A Course Introduction to Philosophy*, 4th ed., New York, Random House, 1981, pp. 386-387).

³⁷ J.B., Lotz “Aesthetics” in Baker K., op.cit., p. 9.

³⁸ Ibid. p. 8.

³⁹ A. O., Onigbinde, op.cit. p. 183.

from those that merely describe or merely evaluate. For instance, while sociology might describe democracy, ethics can evaluate it but only political philosophy can do the first and second order activity viz: description and evaluate of the description. Political philosophy is commonly divided into (i) classical (ii) modern political theories. The classical political theories may be defined roughly as those that offer advice for achieving an ideal society. Modern theories, on the other hand, are primarily devoted to philosophical analysis of terms used in political discussions.⁴⁰ Among the leading political philosophers are Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Hobbes, etc.

Applied Philosophy (Philosophy in Learning Today)

There is today an increasing anxiety for the appreciation of the possible philosophical principles behind most specialized fields of learning. The result being that there is almost a philosophy of everything currently. Various sciences, even desire to find out the basic assumptions, ‘prejudices’ and indeed underlying patterns that serve as directive presuppositions or motive engines driving, focusing and sustaining their various engagements. In effect, not a few rather practical and independent disciplines have developed their correlative philosophical critiques. Hence, we have: Philosophy of science, of education, of law, of history and of language, etc. These are called applied philosophical disciplines because in them the principles, speculative methods and attitudes of philosophy are employed to investigate the foundations and conclusions of these subject areas and to criticize them constructively.

Philosophy of Science

There was a time when all branches of learning are aspects of one body of knowledge – philosophy. Even after they have gained their independence by solving their own respective problems, philosophy as mother of all sciences remained to evaluate, criticize and apply the new found solutions. Indeed after science has solved certain problems there remains the need to understand, interpret and evaluate the body of facts it has accumulated. But it belongs to philosophical enterprise to assimilate and understand bare facts and place them into larger and more general contexts.⁴¹ Philosophy of science is that branch of philosophy which attempts to clarify and analyze scientific concepts and theories with the aim of making their scientific usage clear. It answers such questions as: What characteristics distinguish scientific inquiry

⁴⁰ R. Popkin and A. Stroll, op.cit. p. 59.

⁴¹ S.E, Stumpf *Elements of Philosophy: An Introduction*, McGraw-Hill Book company, New York, 1987, pp. 2-3.

from other types of investigation? What procedures should scientists follow in investigating nature? What condition must be fulfilled for a scientific explanation to be correct? What is the cognitive status of scientific laws and principles? Yet, according to Makumba, today, philosophy of science is more concerned with fundamental or methodological problems about correct scientific theory.⁴² The theories that attract a lot of attention for instance are the quantum theory, relativity theory and thermodynamic theory.

Philosophy of Education

Education is quite a complex system of interchange between subjects and recipients of values and experiences in which slight changes at any point influences the whole process. Philosophy of education is therefore that branch of philosophy that seeks to comprehend education in its entirety. It therefore depends on formal philosophy in the sense that the problems of educational philosophy are of a general philosophical character. As it were, philosophy of education “interprets education by means of general concepts that will guide our choice of educational ends and policies.”⁴³ In philosophy of education, philosophy serves as a guide post for education and the fundamental problems of philosophy and those of education are closely interrelated. Philosophy of education seeks to answer such questions as: What could good aims of education be? How can man come to know the good? Should man be educated only for this world or the future world?⁴⁴ That is, what is the competence of education?

Philosophy of Law

At the interface of law and the civil society, the philosophical theorizing on the nature and origin and end of law becomes inevitable. Philosophy of law could, therefore, be defined as a theoretical investigation of the problems concerning the nature, formulation and application of law in the society. It looks at the end of man, the civil society and law itself and from these speculations determines the proper meaning and use of law. Otherwise law may become arbitrary and an obstacle to freedom of citizens instead of a principle of order.

⁴² M.M., Makumba op.cit. pp. 76-77.

⁴³ Ibid. p. 77.

⁴⁴ E.M., Nwabuisi, *Philosophy of Education in Modern Times*, Etukokwu pub.: Onitsha, 1992, p. 11.

Law as law is a practical art; it is incapable of self reflection as to criticize its own foundations in view of proper operations. Philosophy lends this help in the form of philosophy of law. The remotest and yet the most incisive attempt at a speculative criticism of law came in the Plato's *Crito* where the issue was as to the justice of the law, its morality, its spirit and not the mere letters. In his *Philosophy of Law*, Roger A. Shiner observes that "philosophy of law deal with subtle issues internal to law or relating to law, to politics and society."⁴⁵ Some of the topics which a well structured philosophy of law would treat may include: the definition of law, or if strict definition proves unfruitful, description of models of law that throw light on difficult and meaningful cases. It also analyses such concepts as legal right or duty, legal action, intention and responsibility, not excluding the nature of legal reasoning and adjudication.⁴⁶ It functions to clarify, guide and moderate the processes of law.

Philosophy of Language

Philosophy of Language as a special discipline has been known only since the work of W. Von Humboldt (1767-1835). It was later popularized in the works of Ludwig Wittgenstein. As it were, thinkers have shown renewed interest in the problem of language recently. Through the times, stoics held that language is given naturally while the Sophists find in language a mere agreement among men. Philosophy of language is that branch of Philosophy which attempts to understand the components of a working language, the relationship and the understanding which the speaker has to its elements and the relationship they bear to the world. The most important tasks of philosophy of language are the clarification of the relationship between thinking and speaking, between symbols of thought and intention between expressive and representative functions of language. It is also the explanation of the psycho-physical conditions of speech and the role of the individual and the community in the growth of a language, the relationship between common language types and the structure of a particular language; the investigation of the temporally first sources of language and the present new production of it in the child and the constant elaboration of it.⁴⁷ The difficulty encountered in clearly delineating the limits of philosophy of language was explained by Alston when he said that the "problems concerning language

⁴⁵ Cf. A. Roger Shiner, "Philosophy of Law" in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, pp. 589-590.

⁴⁶ S. Blackburn op.cit. p. 213.

⁴⁷ W., Brugger "Language, Philosophy Of" in Baker K. Op.cit., p. 220.

that are typically dealt with by philosophers constitute a loosely knit collection, for which it is difficult to find any clear criterion separating it from the problems concerning language dealt with by grammarians, psychologists and anthropologist”.⁴⁸ What is more? Much philosophy especially in the 20th century has been informed by the belief that philosophy of language is the fundamental basis of all philosophical problems, in that language is the distinctive way in which we give shape to metaphysical beliefs.⁴⁹ Philosophy of language has the closest affinity with philosophy of the mind, since it needs an account of what it is in our understanding that enables us to use language. It also mingles closely with epistemology, since knowledge is expressed in language etc. Generally, philosophy of language (semiotics) is divided into syntax, semantic and pragmatics.

Philosophy of History

History as history is about the sequence of events that is “happenings”. But the science of history is an attempt to present a sequence of accounts of these factual events. There is an inseparable relationship between the sequence of events and their historical accounts which is overly descriptive. Philosophy of history otherwise called meta-history attempts to “subject history itself as well as the science of history to a thorough investigation and to understand it from the ultimate principles of existence and of knowledge.”⁵⁰ It covers a whole consistent account of the general course of events over time and the nature and methods of historiography. Simply put, philosophy of history does reflect upon the ‘nature of history’, or of historical thinking. The term itself was introduced into learning by Voltaire in the 18th century. Some renowned philosophers of history include: Hegel, Herder, Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Karl Marx.

The two meanings of history as “happening,” and as “an account” necessitated the two broad divisions of philosophy of history into (1) substantive or speculative philosophy of history (philosophy of history as mere happening), (2) critical or analytical philosophy of history (where history is understood as an account or science of the happenings). Notice also that in philosophy of history one can distinguish two major sub-disciplines. (i) The logic of history and (2) the metaphysics of history. While the logic of

⁴⁸ W.P., *Alston Philosophy of Language*, Prentice-Hall of India Private Limited, New Delhi, 2003, p. 1.

⁴⁹ S. Blackburn op.cit. p. 211.

⁵⁰ W., Brugger “History, Philosophy Of” in K., Baker op.cit. p. 175.

history studies the grounds, basic assumptions and method of science of history, the metaphysics of history searches for the essence, causes and meaning of history. With these two aspects of philosophy of history, it is easy to “grasp history in its essential relationship to man and to fit into its proper place in the basic structures of existence.”⁵¹

Conclusion

It is important to remark that the paradigm used for the discourse on the branches of philosophy in this essay is not absolute and exclusive. It is only a preferred but popular approach. As a matter of fact, there is today, an interesting module used by Egbeke Aja which divided philosophy into three schedules: Reality (Metaphysics); Value (Axiology) and Knowledge (Epistemology). Metaphysics which is the study of reality is then further divided into ontology, cosmology, rational psychology and theodicy. Axiology been the study of values is further divided into ethics, aesthetics, social and political philosophy, philosophy of law and philosophy of education. Finally, epistemology which is a discourse of knowledge breaks up into theory of knowledge, logic, philosophy of language and philosophy of science.⁵² All the different approaches or schema to appreciating the branches of philosophy are mere methodological devices or tools of representation of same reality. No schema is a law. Whichever one adopts goes to the same end of demonstrating the vast divides in the universe of philosophy.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² E., Aja, *Theory op. cit.*, p.