

UNBUNDLING METAPHYSICS AND METAPHYSICAL THINKING IN POSTMODERN REGIME

By

Isaac Chidi Igwe, PhD

Department of Philosophy,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
ic.igwe@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract

The orientation derived from the doctrine and understanding of Being is that the more constantly it is interrogated, the more revolutionary reality becomes and the greater our appreciation of existence. This is to the extent that it becomes impossible to pin down or reduce the nature of things to this or that, as each attempt in doing that will always throw up a more compelling alternative begging for attention. This, has been the trajectory of the historical sojourn of metaphysics and metaphysical thinking. Finding reveals that the attempt to reduce the familiar, the convenient and the knowable to all there is, has made the unfamiliar, the inconvenient and the unknowable more compelling in exerting attention. Thus, the notion of metaphysics as the study of *what is* turns out to be the problematic in metaphysical thinking, as *what is not* becomes consigned into nothingness and this very act, invariably, continues to render *what is not* as object worthy of investigation in postmodern regime. On the strength of the foregoing issues, this paper, with the aid of phenomenology, seeks to unbundle the ossified notion of metaphysics as *what is by* revealing its compelling nature and different ways metaphysics and metaphysical thinking do radically manifest in human experience. The objective of the study is to rescue metaphysics from ossification and excessive abstraction which it is often accused of. This new dimension to metaphysics avails fresh opportunities for scholarship and societal progress. As an exercise in postmodern thought, the paper submits that metaphysics is not only dynamic in nature, but also that everyone engages in it in one form or the other in the course of human daily rounds.

Keywords: Categorization, Metaphysics, Metaphysical, Mental Process, Postmodernism

Introduction

In a society where the notion of metaphysics often brings to mind the meanings such as: magic, mysticism, voodoo or unending abstraction, there is bound to be a general decline, half-knowledge and apathy of interest towards the discipline and its real nature. Such seems to be the trajectory of metaphysics in recent times, hence it becomes imperative for a radical debriefing of its proper nature, with a view to further expounding the frontiers of human understanding about the subject matter. Radical approach to metaphysics in a postmodern phase does not just affirm the reality of metaphysics but also goes further to explicate the input of metaphysical thinking at every segment of human activity, even when one may not be a trained metaphysician. Contrary to the view of metaphysics as obsolete theories which have over-stayed their usefulness in human progress, the postmodern metaphysical order, takes a radical stance to show that metaphysics is not only relevant but also remains a pivotal instrument of social building. Thus, a radical metaphysical thinking is a demonstration with copious instances, how human beings metaphysicize or think metaphysically, which makes it an effort in futility for any mortal to wish away its prime position in the hierarchy of meaning making exercise. Therefore, the discussion in the article is divided into two sections. The first part tries to conceptualize the general notion of metaphysics as the first principle. The second part demonstrates how metaphysics manifests in postmodern phase and in the final analysis, submits that one may not be a metaphysician before being metaphysical.

Explicating the Proper Sense of Metaphysics

The deepest question in philosophy is that of ‘why’ and ‘what’. It is the most fundamental of all questions; it arouses the consciousness, deepens the thought and creates a hollow which often craves to be filled. The quest for the identification of this ‘what’ and ‘why’ question is the beginning of an exercise in metaphysics. This question of “why and what”, is the question of origin, it is the question of the first principle, it transcends the world of gross matter, gravitating to the realms of the esoteric. Thus, the most fundamental of all questions being, “why are there essents rather than nothing? ... why is there anything at all, rather than nothing?... obviously this is the first of all questions” (Heidegger, 1959, p.1).

For Heidegger, many men seem not to have encountered such questions. By encountering the question, it does not imply encountering its everyday’s interrogative form but rather, to raise question in such a way that one comes in contact, face to face with its inevitability. When we talk about it being the first question and the most fundamental question, Heidegger likens it in regard to rank, and thus he says: “the question why are there essents rather than nothing? is first in rank for us first because it is the most far reaching, second because it is the deepest, and finally because it is the most fundamental of all questions” (Ibid, p.2).

For the early philosophers, a tradition grew up which necessitated the asking of these questions. By this tradition we mean a tradition that refused to accept anything on its face value, a tradition that was no longer contented with mythological and theological explanation of the phenomenal world. One of such instances of the mythological explanation of reality was the story of the origin as recounted by Hesiod in the eighth century B.C. He talked about the origins of all things, of the birth of heaven and earth and of Homer’s gods. For Melchert, this Hesiodian way of accounting for the multiplicity of things is rather unsatisfactory because it throws more questions than it intends to answer. For instance, Melchert interrogates; “If we are told that all things come from an original pair, we are immediately faced with the question, And ‘what’ does the original pair come from?” (Melchert, 1991, p.7)

Reactions to this question of origin of all things attracted the early thinkers into postulating all forms of elements as the primordial stuff wherein all things originate. Although we may not outrightly categorize the early Greek Philosophers as Metaphysicians, what is instructive in their efforts which we want to draw out is that the search for the ultimate principle (what is) gradually culminated into our present discussion, most especially the efforts of Parmenides. However, what we make bold to state here is that the question of ‘why’ and ‘what’ presupposes the metaphysical, and as rightly observed by Heidegger, it has dual nature. “Firstly, every metaphysical question always covers the whole range of metaphysical problem. Secondly, every metaphysical question can only be put in such a way that the questioner as such is by his very questioning involved in the question” (Heidegger, 1949, p.355).

Metaphysical question into the origin involves the inquirer and at the same time the inquired. The inquiring mind wants to have a lucid grasp of the inquired. It is this very nature that makes metaphysics the unity of a whole in that both the particulars and the universals are united in a whole. As a quest into origin, it involves transcendence. As a transcendence, it traverses both the given to the non-given with the ultimate aim of identifying the underlying unity amid the world of plurality. Hence, it is not however surprising that it (metaphysics) is classified as the base and the apex.

Strictly speaking therefore, both in content and in meaning, the word metaphysics is generally traced to Aristotle, who in his work titled “Metaphysics” developed what he called the science

of “First philosophy”. For those works which deal on what is today known as metaphysics, Aristotle had four different names for them; *First Philosophy*, *First Science*, *Wisdom* and *Theology*. Rightly observed by Inyagen (2014), the name metaphysics *Ta meta ta phusika* (the ones after the physical ones) was coined by the editor of his work- Andronicus of Rhodes, and it seems to indicate the position of this work amongst other works of his.

The physical ones as noted above are books contained in what we now call Aristotle’s physics. Thus, that was how the world metaphysics came to exist in philosophical lexicon. As we have seen, the term itself can mean ‘beyond physics’ but it is tricky to get more precise without inviting controversy.

Metaphysics, just like philosophy itself, is difficult to pin down with a single definition because whatever definition given to it, opens a fresh ground for further probing. Hence, it could be regarded as a branch of philosophy concerned with explaining the fundamental nature of being and the world. It is the study of reality as such; it is the science that aims at determining the real nature of things in their wholistic form. According to Ewing, metaphysics is

Conceived as the study of the nature of reality in its most general aspects in so far as this can be achieved by us. It deals with such questions as- what is the relation between matter and mind?. Which is primary? Are men free? Is the sect a substance or only a science of experiences? Is the universe infinite? Does God exist? How far is the universe a unity and how far a diversity? How far, if at all, is it a rational system? (Ewing, 1951, p.15).

For Plato, metaphysics is the knowledge of the ideal. Descartes views it as the knowledge of things that are beyond sense experience. For Aquinas, it is the ultimate explanation of the mystery of being in the ultimate being. For Kant, it is the transcendental analysis of the content of the human mind. Kant’s ultimate aim was to demonstrate the creative and inventive powers of the human mind and how the mind proceeds to create Concepts with which the world is organized. Descartes himself has similar aim of proving how metaphysics is embedded in human constitution. For Heidegger, metaphysics is the ontological inquiry into being. For Hegel, it is the process through which the Absolute actualizes itself in itself. “The central theme of Hegel’s metaphysics is to show how the structure of things is fundamentally holistic” (Stem, 1990, p.vii).

The greatest question of metaphysics has continued to be the question of unity. That is, what is the underlying structure of an apparently unified totality? For Schopenhauer, metaphysics is a “knowledge that goes beyond the possibility of experience and beyond nature, which renders nature possible” (Hospers, 1973, p.350). For Roger Hancock, metaphysics examines the true nature of things as opposed to their apparent constitution and appearance, while metaphysicians preoccupy themselves with the concept of existence and reality (Hancock, 1967, pp.5-289).

Note this last definition by Roger above. It talks about the real nature of things as opposed to the particular things we see everywhere. It follows that the notion of what is really real could be different from the notion of mere appearance. In other words, how things are in their true nature might be different from how they present themselves to us. That is to say that, if the really real were to be identified with apparent constitution of particular things, there would be no difficulty spotting it out since tom dik and harry, at the tip of the finger, could as well tell what it is. But this is not always the case, hence “the first question in philosophy which is “what

is what is” or “what is real reality” (Unah, 2004, p.3). In other words, that which distinguishes itself from appearance is what constitutes the real. Stace puts it succinctly thus:

Metaphysics is the search for the real. It follows that the notion of reality is not the same as the notion of mere being or existence, for if the real were simply identified with whatever has being, there would be no occasion to search for it. A man, to find the real, would need only to open his eyes... the problem of metaphysics is to find reality within, beyond, or behind appearance (Stace, 1969, p.3).

Since it has been established that the real is far from mere appearances, it follows that the age-long question in metaphysics “what is what is”? still persists. For instance, when the question “what is man?” is posited, it does not just stop at the simple anthropological and biological answers given to it. In other words, while some metaphysical questions receive satisfactory answers, others receive answers which are themselves further questions or ground for further questions. In philosophy, especially metaphysics, Iroegbu posits: we do not just stop at asking what is man? “We ask: why man at all, why reality itself? Why being, including matter?... what is the ultimate ground of existence of reality?”(Iroegbu, 2004, p.19).

What Iroegbu meant above is that metaphysical questions have no finality of answers, as the very act of questioning is more important than the answers given. Further noted by M.J. Loux and D. W. Zimmerman:

The range of legitimate metaphysical questions keep expanding... what is the nature of time? What is it for an ordinary object to persist through time? What is the nature of space? Do events constitute an irreducible basic kind of object? If so, what are they like and what are their identity conditions? What is causation? Are there any uncaused events?(Loux and Zimmerman, 2005, p.3).

Any worthwhile exercise in metaphysics must entail raising of these basic and fundamental questions. Unfortunately enough, philosophy, and by extension metaphysics could be said to have lost its bearing with the development in positive sciences. This degeneration attained its peak in the middle ages when philosophy was reported to have taken the position of a handmaid to theology. According to Unah, consequent upon this development, philosophy lost its independent status and became subservient to the specialized positive sciences. Unah agrees that there is a sense in which philosophy as a parent discipline must continue to nourish the positive sciences. However, it must reject the temptation of going to seek for credence from the activities of the positive sciences. Thus he speaks: “The proper way that philosophy can play the role of nourishing the sciences is to do so in a sagely, oracular manner, that is, by constantly raising and renewing the question of reality in general” (Unah, 2004, p.4).

The point worth stressing here is that philosophy must not abandon its primary duty as a comprehensive account of experience, informed by a theory of being into mundane activities in the sciences.

All haven been said, just as religion was born from human helplessness, Ideology from conflict, and technology from the need to master the environment, so also metaphysics—just like theoretical science—was probably begotten by the awe and bewilderment at the boundless variety and apparent chaos of the phenomenal world, i.e., the sum total of human experience (Bunge, 1977, p.1). Although metaphysics deals with the foundation of being whatsoever, its place in the scheme of world reconstruction today is often dispersed without any regards . Such disposition towards metaphysics is however, not unconnected with the notion that it does

not address human concrete day-to-day challenges like; bread baking and bread sharing, showing one the escape route from ever-surmounting economic hardship, and stuffing one's bank account with hundreds of dollars, etcetera. Admittedly, however, it is not surprising that such argument against metaphysics often ensues, because, one of the major concern of the average man (the class of people Plato describes as the people of the stomach) has always been ephemeral and mundane things such as; how to put food into the stomach, how to manipulate existential challenges without recourse to life principles, rules and so on. For such people therefore, albeit ignorantly, abstract thought or metaphysics, has become out of fashion. This perception about metaphysics is affirmatively disabused in the next section. It will demonstrates how metaphysics is not just possible but very much alive in different form of human activities.

Thinking Metaphysically in a Postmodern Fashion

Thinking metaphysically in a postmodern fashion is a tricky but fascinating exercise because post modernism somehow inherited both the metaphysical tradition of the Greeks (the search for what is ultimate reality) and at the same time claims to critique it. Put differently, on one hand, classical metaphysics, from Plato to Heidegger, centers on grounding the Being of beings, first principles, what is ultimate and universal. On the other hand, postmodern thinkers like Lyotard, Derrida, Foucault and others, are more suspicious of these universals. In fact, they argue that metaphysical systems often smuggle in hidden power structures or pretend to finality where there is only contingency. Strictly speaking, in a postmodern register, metaphysics shifts from "what is the ultimate truth?" to "what are the conditions, narratives and language games through which we construct what seems like truth". In earnest, postmodern metaphysics is a radical shift from the fixated ancient Greek ontology which restricted metaphysics to "what is" and sees becoming or "what is not" as alien to rational thinking. Traditional metaphysics wants a stable and strong center. Thinking metaphysically in a postmodern fashion, then, becomes an awareness of instability that Being, identity and reality are not fixed substances but effects of difference and relationality. It resists absolute story. This, however, does not mean that metaphysics is abandoned altogether in postmodern time. Instead, it means that the notion of metaphysics has become pluralized. In other words, rather than speak of "structure of reality," its emphasis is on "structures of realities," Speaking metaphysically in postmodern regime is context dependent ways of meaning-making.

In this way, the debate in postmodern metaphysics no longer stops at "what is reality" or "what reality is not", it now entails showing how the human mind has become the powerhouse and architect of world reconstruction through concept formation, active categorization and all processes of ideational activities of the infinite ergo. It is imperative to proceed to explain these new ways of metaphysicizing.

Active Categorization by the Mind

To categorize is to name, classify, group or advance reality to be this or that. When one begins to discriminate, analogically calibrate and associate, one unwittingly engages in a form of metaphysics. It is a meaning-making kind of thinking. (Gentner 2003; Gentner and Christie 2008, Kurtz et al. 1999; Penn et al. 2008), also argue that similarity and association are two great forces of mental organization which affect all species. However, the human species have the upper hand in them. In other words, selective forms of similarity or analogy and causation or association are majorly the stock in trade to all human species. Accordingly, these authors argue that the capacity to perceive and apply strictly relational similarity is a great contribution and proof to human species' agility (Gentner and Colhoun, 2010, p.35). Active categorization of the mind is the basis for thinking and probably the most essential ability of our cognitive

functions. Graf (2010), argues that an organism without such abilities would be continually confronted with an ever-changing arrays of seemingly meaningless and unrelated impressions. In the reasoning of Graf, the first type of categorization which any organism needs to first engage in before it can be said to possess categorization ability is environmental categorization.

Lakoff (1987), believes that there is nothing more basic than categorization to our thought, perception, action, and speech. Every time we see something as a kind of thing, for example, a tree, we are categorizing and by implication, metaphysicizing. Whenever we reason about kinds of things, chairs, nations, illness, emotions, or any kind of thing at all, we are employing categories. These categories are mental processes, thus metaphysical exercises. To that end, without ability to categorize, we cannot function at all either in the physical world, social or intellectual life. Thus, for Lakoff, an understanding of how we categorize is central to any understanding of how we think and how we function (Lakoff, 1987, pp.5-6). This idea is again reinforced by Unah (2010, p.139). In his discourse on postmodern thinking, he tries to defend the various ways in which metaphysics manifests in our day to day activities albeit unwittingly. To him, active categorization as aspect of thinking manifests in various manner of language and this goes to show how the human mind metaphysicizes. Thus, Unah asserts:

All thinking or reasoning activities are in the final analysis metaphysical, whether the thinking is about actuarial science or biology or concrete physical items in the world such as how to form a table or chair. What is critical is not that tables and chairs are metaphysical, but that the mental process through which we conceive and form them cannot be described as anything else but metaphysical...in formulating the discipline of biology or any other for that matter, mental processes of ideational activity are involved. So are the concepts, theories and structure of the discipline of biology creations of human pure reason...Thus, any such active categorizing of reality by the mind is an exercise in metaphysics (Unah, 2010, p.139).

No doubt, Unah's view above further gives the right footing to our belief that when the mind begins to assign meanings to reality, whether such reality is physical or mental, it is an exercise in thinking, qua metaphysics.

Concept Generation

Cognitive competence is a mental power possessed by an individual by which one is able to predict, forecast future happening and interpret historical events. It is both forward moving and backward introspecting. When the mind begins to go beyond now to search for principles and ideas with which to explain the present situation or organize current experience, we say the mind is engaged in transcendental exercise. In the same vein, when the mind begins to reflect on past events, history and established laws with which to redirect the course of present events, we also say the mind has gone into the foray of transcendence.

Transcendence itself is a topic in existential ontology which reveals the metaphysical power of man by which he reorganizes and reorders his world. According to Mondin (1985, p.196), "transcendence is a word that is derived from Latin: from *transcendere* (from trans-scendere, which means to ascend on, elevate oneself above, across, displace, pass, scale, etc)." It is attained by a spatial relation of surpassing, unboundedness, passing beyond, displacement, in the sense of being above, 'being beyond outside of' (ibid). Unah (2002, p.83), understands

transcendence to mean “the metaphysical power of man which makes all world constituting tasks and all world comprehending activities possible”. For Mondin (1985), it is for this reason that we have phrases such as ‘to transcend one’s own confines, to transcend every limit, to transcend the cloud’. In the same vein, we now have in philosophical circle what we call self-transcendence. This term, Mondin writes: “indicates the property of man by which he constantly goes beyond himself in all that he thinks, will, and all that he realizes”(ibid, p.197).

The point that is deducible from the foregoing is that concept formation is an exercise in transcendence, and transcendence itself is the product of metaphysics, a demonstration of man’s cognitive and metaphysical ability to engage in theoretical exercise. When one uses one’s mind to produce ideas, solve riddles or problems, it is an exercise in metaphysics. Scholars seem to agree that when thinking about the world, we go beyond the information given by assuming hidden capacities, forces, or processes beyond the surface of orderly event successions (Waldmann, 2010, p.124). When through the mind, we frequently generate ideas, plans, concept and project into the future with a view to organizing and re-ordering our society, in these activities, we are said to engage in concept formation. To be sure, concept formation is a process by which the human mind, frequently generate ideas, plans with the view to using the knowledge gathered to advance reality and assign meaning to experience. This activity is so crucial to the existence of man and peaceful society, to the extent that Unah avers that:

Without these ideas, concepts, plans and projects generated by human reason no meaning can be assigned to the world, no mobilization and organization of experience would be possible. It is because of the metaphysical capacity of the mind to generate ideas and concepts, plans and projects that we are able to create system of meaning and add value to the world (Unah, 2010, p.139).

It is for these reasons that the human mind must continuously engage in the interrogation of reality with a view to using the knowledge gained for the enrichment of the world. The amazing thing about this interrogating exercise is that the more often the human mind does that, the more new and great ideas are garnered with which human experience is oriented. In this regard, when we talk about concept formation as an aspect of metaphysics, we try to look at the process which the human mind undergoes in order to tease out, sift or abstract ideas, and arrange same into a body of principles upon which human experience is organized.

To express the same point in different way, any exercise in thinking is an exercise in metaphysics by which the human mind generates ideas, plans and concepts with which the world is reordered. The interesting thing about this exercise is that the more we engage in it, the more we put the gift of thinking in action. Therefore, what we seek to drive home is that the formation of concepts is the first calling of a thinker. It is by it that existing ones are challenged, human language enriched and new order set. It is in this sense that we regard such ideational activities as trade in the metaphysical. In other words, all mental processes by which we arrive at concept formations and generate ideas are by its very nature, exercise in the metaphysical thinking. This was heavily supported by Deleuze (1994) in *What is Philosophy*. There he argued that the primary aim and calling of thinking is to create, institute and invent concepts. According to him, what the traditional image of thought lost, difference and repetition discovered.

Mental Processes of Ideational Activity

One expression that has become common in human day-to-day discussion is the use of the statement “Ideas rule the world”. Although often used loosely, its deeper meaning reveals the

primacy and autonomy of the human thought to metaphysicize and legislate for all mankind. Casual as such expression often appears, its strategic position to our discussion here is of utmost importance. Descartes upholds this view when he said in his *Meditations* that whatsoever the mind contemplates, or any form of mental process in so far as it is clear and distinct, ultimately is. Thus, radical metaphysics in Descartes' view, urges man to abandon abstract speculation and be concerned with how to use the immense capacity of his inner ability in transforming nature and the world around him. Hence he believes that:

It is possible to arrive at knowledge which is most useful in life, and that, instead of the speculative philosophy taught in the schools, a practical philosophy can be found by which, knowing the power and the effects of fire, water, air, the stars, the heavens and all the other bodies which surround us, as distinctly as we know the various trades of our craft men, we might put them in the same way to all the uses for which they are appropriate, and thereby make ourselves, as it were, masters and possessors of nature (Descartes, 1968, p.78).

Put differently, what Descartes expresses here is the need to radicalize metaphysics which throws up reality as other determined and pragmatic. Through this new orientation of metaphysics, man would be at an advantageous position to master and control his world. Again, it is equally in this new orientation of metaphysics that Descartes conceives God as concept, idea or pure thinking. Following this progression, God in the view of Descartes represents perfection. In his classification of ideas, he states "now among these ideas, besides that which represents me to myself, about which there can be no difficulty here, there is one which represents to me a God" (ibid, 121). Spinoza, according to Scruton, has this to say as regards the Cartesian notion of God.

When we describe a mode of thinking (an Idea), we situate it in the total system of Ideas (which is God, conceived under the attribute of thought). No explanation of an idea can be formulated, except in terms of other ideas... (Scruton, 1995, p.55).

Since the highest hierarchy of Ideas could only be anchored within that which is perfect, every system of Ideas is subsumed under such total conception. As in the case of Descartes, it should be noted that what Spinoza meant when he talked about total system of Ideas (which he dubbed God), does not in any way refer to the personified-anthropomorphic being as invented in the two big religions of the world (Christianity and Islam). But rather, he meant pure intellectual abstraction. He equally made further illustration that the Ideas of the universe in its totality is made possible via the Ideas of God which is represented abundantly in us. Our efforts to understand reality through this Idea takes us to the love of reality, by implication, the love of God. That is to say that, reason in itself is divine, and every human being participates in this divinity. When we make any meaningful statement about the world, we simply demonstrate our participation in this divinity. "But this love is active and intellectual, not passive and emotional; in acquiring it, we come to participate in the divine nature, we see the world in its fullness, under the Idea of God, and not in partial, confused or passive form" (ibid, p. 65).

When we tap into this absolute Idea, we perceive things in their totality. And as further noted by Scruton, in so doing, we begin to perceive reality under the aspect of eternity (where eternity in this sense means, not endless time but timelessness). We see the world as an entity which endures because it has no duration, which is infinite because it has no part, and in which we

participate because in it we are dissolved. Seeing the world thus is to see God (ibid, p.65). What this view puts forward is the intellectual abstraction of the nature of God as pure consciousness by which we project thought beyond the realm of matter into that realm where we begin to assign concepts for reconstruction and re-creation of our world. Apart from the stated purpose;

Other ways of representing God-as the personal-anthropomorphic, passionate creature of established religion-might be useful in encouraging moral sentiments among the ignorant... moreover, the moral life of the enlightened has no need of anthropomorphic religion. Seeing things, they recognize that happiness, freedom and virtue are one and the same, and therefore that virtue is strictly its own reward (ibid, 65).

To further add, the knowledge of the anthropomorphic-pedestrian conception of God does nothing but leaves man in total helplessness, determinism and despair. Conceiving God as pure concept for the purpose of reordering existence equips man with the power of self mastery, responsibility and ownership of actions. Besides, if indeed we accept the Greek's association of God with wisdom, and Philosophy as the love of wisdom: it equally follows that the access route to God is that which passes through the crucible light of philosophy. Hence, we can argue that Scruton was right by representing Spinoza's conception of the love of God as that which is pure. Such love covers, "to the extent that we understand something, we obtain pleasure from it, and to the extent that such pleasure is pure-unmingled with confused Ideas-to that extent does it constitute love" (ibid).

In this conception, that which is pure, that which is unmingled, distinct and clear is the absolute Idea. Again, it is necessary to reemphasize that the Cartesian God, just like the African traditional notion of God, is problem solving. That is, the concept of God is an abstraction projected into consciousness by which we actively categorize reality. It upholds the "majesty of thought" and the autocracy of reason.

In the African traditional circle, when a god is perceived to be impotent or seemed to be failing in his responsibility of defending the course of its worshipers, the people reserve the right to abandon him in search for a more portent one. Such spirit of revolt and rejection of uncomfortable circumstances have, overtime, been gradually substituted with the religious cliché "it is well", even when situations are degenerating into absurdity. Thus, a god remains relevant in so far as he continues to solve the existential problem of its worshipers. In the Cartesian sense, therefore, we begin to act God when we begin to abstract the God-like qualities for the reconstruction of human experience. In his view, thinking is the essence of man. Thus, according to Stumpf (1979, p.197), Descartes says: "I am, then, in the strict sense only a thing that thinks; that is, I am a mind, or intelligence, or intellect, or reason-words whose meaning I have ignorant of until now... I am a thing... a thinking thing".

He concludes, since I am a thinking thing, and have in me an idea of God, whatever the cause may be to which my nature is attributed, it must necessarily be admitted that the cause must equally be a thinking thing, and possess within it the idea of all the perfection that I attribute to the divine nature (Descartes, 1968, p.128).

In whatever mental activity that one engages in, involves a form of metaphysics and concept distillation. When I perceive a horse, I have a particular impression (in this case a visual impression): when I think of a horse, I summon up an idea: this idea belongs to a class which together constitute the meaning (for me) of the word horse (Scruton, 1995, p. 123).

It follows that, in this new sense of thinking, a carpenter who carves a wood-work is not by any way different from an engineer who builds the war ship. The argument here is that the real existences of their various inventions are not the physical and concrete things that are visible to the sight. That is to say that, the real existence lies in the mind of the inventor, that is, a place we call *mind-bank*. Mind-bank is where the abundant wealth of the mind is stored, and ready to be used up whenever it is called up. By implications, the richer the mind-bank of a nation, the wealthier it becomes.

On the other hand, reverse is the case when the mind-bank of a nation/people is bankrupt. In the same vein, the beautiful architectural designs or aesthetic outlook of the most elegant cities of the world like Budapest in Hungary, Bruges in Belgium, Vancouver in Canada, Florence in Italy, Amsterdam in Netherlands, Lisbon in Portugal, Prague in Czech Republic, Paris in France, Abuja in Nigeria, et cetera, could not have emerged *Ex nihilo* (out of nothing) other than from the abundance of the richness of the mind of the designer (the bank-mind). That was why irrespective of the catastrophic consequences of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the Second World War, and the *September 11* Al-Qaeda's destructive blow on the world trade center, it only took the Japanese and the Americans respectively few years to replicate a more beautiful architectural edifices of the affected cities and structures. That is to say, even when the physical inventions are destroyed, in as much as the Ideational processes are still the legislator of experience, and in as much as the laboratory of thought still remains the prototype of all existing human inventions, the creative ingenuity (mind-bank) of man will ever remain the brain-box of development and inventories.

Thus, when this mental process of bringing things that were not to be begins to take place, it cannot be described as anything else rather than metaphysical exercise. That is, every act of transcendence, planning, projecting and imagination is in the last analysis metaphysical, and the demonstration of thinking in motion. It is due to this radical nature of contemporary ontology that has compelled various field of endeavour to return to their roots and begin to question their very basis. It is in line with this that we see sciences raise some metaphysical question about their disciplines today with the view to strengthening them. Bunge (1977), re-echoes this view in the following lines:

Indeed ontology has gone Mathematical and is being cultivated by engineers and computer scientists. As a matter of fact a number of technologist have developed, over the past three decades, certain exact theories concerning the most basic traits of entities or systems of various general (Bunge, 1977, p.7).

As a result of this radical approach to thinking, we now have such theories as: Switching theory, network theory, automata theory, linear systems theory, control theory, Mathematical machine theory and information theory as the emerging metaphysical offspring of contemporary technology (ibid). For Kant (1934, p.36), this attitude is a natural disposition of the human mind.

In other words, for Kant, every human being has a disposition towards metaphysical thinking, that is, to be metaphysical is the nature of man. Stace (1969, p.174), wraps it up in the following words: "to think in concepts is to have free or abstract concepts present in my mental processes, as when I talk in geometry about circles and triangles, knowing very well that these are pure abstractions."

Engaging the Human Mind as the Bundle of Possibilities

From the discussion so far, what is deducible remains the fact that the human psychical powers is limitless and endowed with great potentialities. In other words, it has the ability to affirm

and intuit into the realm of a vast expanse of uncharted territory of possibilities, that realm where reality becomes fluidly increasing. It can on another occasion re-emerge into the world of phenomena to assert itself and become the arbitrator of its own being and destiny. Through its power of transcendence, it avers that reality is not only that which is, but also everything that is not. Expatiating transcendence as it relates to man and the mind, Mondin (1985) further writes:

Transcendence with reference to man (mind) is subdivided into two principal types: horizontal and vertical. The former consists of a simple going forward, toward the future, but remaining within the horizon of space and time, and therefore of history. The latter is the one that pushes higher, and tends to exceed the limits of space and time, toward the infinite. The first can be called historical self-transcendence, the second metaphysical self-transcendence (p.197).

Therefore, it is in the second sense of transcendence that our view of the mind in this work is situated, that is, metaphysical transcendence-which we understand to mean the metaphysical power of man to project from the now to the not now. However, the essence of the demonstration of the infinite power of the mind is not just for self-actualization but mainly for the well-being of the society. As such, a sound and fully developed mind will translate into a sound and developed society. Man in his native characteristics is neither bound nor restricted to any given environment. He is ever projecting, transcending his immediate environment in search for Ideas, concepts with which to organize his experience for the betterment of his life and the human society. Put it in another form, man is open beyond the world, and beyond the transient image he has of the world. It is this ever looking ahead of the mind that some theological philosophers hide under to argue the existence of God. For the proponent of this argument, if our destinies do not lie outside existence, the mind would not ever be pushing toward outside and beyond the world in search of a better and more firm principle with which to organize the world. In support of this view, Mondin concludes:

Therefore, the infinite tension of man that pushes him to go beyond all of what he has embraced with his thought, willed with his will, imagined with his fantasy, and realized with his actions, can be comprehended only if it is seen as the research of God (ibid, p.206).

It is the transcendental power of man, as upheld by some western idealists, most especially those of German extraction (Fichte, Shelling, Schopenhauer, Kant, etcetera), that when explored, transforms the society (Igwe, 2025, pp.38-40). The call to this human subjectivity is the call for self-mastery, self-reliance and authenticity of action in place of complacency. The exploration of the human subjectivity shows the primal position that the human mind occupies in the scheme of world transformation. This primevality of thought is the foundation of existence and at the same time, what sustains existence. Okoro (2008) lends further credence to this view in the following words: “this inner power is an unfathomable ability that lies dormant and needs to be explored and used. The interesting thing about this inner ability is that it can be directed to any dimension or function we want it to assume” (Okoro, 2008, p.35).

It is not surprising therefore that the world is now beginning to realize these unbounded possibilities-all embedded in the human mind, so much so that several nations are beginning to mobilize resources into the development of the human mental capacity. Supporting this view, Unah(2010) posits:

More and more interest is being stimulated and shown by researchers and donor and funding agencies in Parapsychology or physical research. It is now becoming increasingly obvious by the day that the mind, if fully developed, is capable of disembodied existence and can perform several functions unaided by physical materials (p.140).

Along this same line, Patrick Prince, an ex-police commissioner and one time vice major of Burbank, and an Irishman, relays his experience in psychic ability. As recounted by Tag, Prince narrates that: “in fact, as police commissioner, I used my abilities to track down suspects. Although at times I couldn’t confront that I had these abilities and laid my good fortune to intuition and luck”(Tag, 1975, p.47).

The experience of Prince above restates one of the inexhaustible capacities of the mind, that is, the mind as a useful tool in complex crime detection. In other words, in the security challenges that appear to bedevil the whole world at present, more psychical dictators could be trained and engaged for the purpose of solving complicated criminal issues. This is a ground breaking discovery in the field of parapsychology. To be sure, Para psychology is that field which “studies a new type of interaction between the human mind and the outside world, and interaction which cannot be accounted for by the present frame work of physics” (Schmidt, 1974, p. 15). It is becoming very clear that the approach to metaphysics has drastically taken a shift from the traditional search for reality to how to harness the inexhaustible human mental capacity for the reengineering of the world. Put in other way round, the issue of parapsychology which we have brought in here, “deals with those phenomena involving the human mind or personality that can’t be explained on the basis of ordinary psychology” (Holzer, 1972, p.9).

Being psychic is not exclusively reserved for few individuals as a gift of some sort. As a matter of fact, every human person has it in him or her but its level of development in each individual is what makes the difference. Indeed, many problems that confront humans today could of a truth be either resolved or greatly alleviated by exploring the fecund depth of human subjectivity. It is for this reason that this study insists on the need for researchers to devote more effort into this field (man’s mental powers). What is today known as psychical healing or psychotherapeutic healing all owes its roots to the immense capacities of the mind to carry out some tasks without the support of physical gadgets. That is, achieving a task telepathically. This power is strictly a natural human ability. In other words, there is nothing supernatural about it, rather, they “are certain facets of human personality that have not been fully explored or understood. As a consequence, we think of them as being supernatural when, in fact, they are perfectly natural” (Holzer, 1972, p.23).

The pertinent significance about this power is that it is inexhaustible. Put differently, the more it is put to use, the more it is replenished and increased. This is unlike electric power for instance, battery which is the more it is used the more it is exhausted. This power could also manifest in what is known as “mental mediumship”, which means “the ability to receive information that cannot be accounted for by Orthodox explanations”(ibid, p.28). Such perceptions include clairaudience, clairvoyance and clairsentience. Now what has all these got to do with our analysis of the mind as the bundle of possibilities? Of course, the answer to this question is implied in the question itself. Although one can contend the validity of the issues discussed here, what remains unarguable according to Hume, is the very fact that, it cannot be doubted that the human mind is endowed with several powers (Hume,1955, p.23); one of which is the psychic abilities as have been repeatedly mentioned in this work. It behooves on

researchers and persons of interests to make an incursion into this unbounded territory of the infinite possibilities of the human mind with a view to unveiling its promises.

Conclusion

An all-encompassing and proper metaphysical thinking portrays a metaphysician as a believer in, and practitioner of metaphysics. He or she is someone who has undergone a rigorous training in metaphysics, equipped with the intellectual capacity to metaphysicize. It also includes one who searches for concepts with which to transform experience and improve the human condition. For instance, if a physicist is concerned with the discovery of properties and interactions of physical objects, a metaphysician is primarily more concerned with discovering and describing the underlying principles that make objects, properties and interaction possible in the first place. Metaphysicians try to explain the fundamental concepts via which the world is understood and recognized. These concepts include properties, existence, possibility, human bodies, and space. They Proffer answers to the questions such as, what is there and why? They make efforts to demystify the age-long paraded myths about the universe in its dynamism and atomism. Therefore anyone who searches for the organizing principle in the midst of diversity is a metaphysician. It is for this reason that the ancient philosophers who devoted their time to the search for these unifying principles are regarded as the pioneering metaphysicians in philosophy.

All of these find their roots from the active functions of the human mind. The point that can never be over-emphasized here is that the human mind plays active roles in human experience. The mind decides for the whole universe. Through pure human subjectivity, the mind plays the roles of God. God, in this sense, we mean, pure concepts, perfections and strict principles. To organize and legislate on experience, the human mind simply extracts all those projected attributes of God and brings them to bear on human affairs. Through the projection of human finite reason, concepts, ideas and plans are generated for the transformation of the society. It is a truism today that as many societies as have not risen to the level of conceptualizing God as pure abstraction still wallow in primitivity, abject penury and primordial existential problems. It is not surprising therefore, that the most religious and prayerful societies are today the most backward and poorest ones. The more they project their alter ego to an anthropomorphic divinity with all powers to do all things (including those things which men at other climes would easily do), the more helpless and miserable their condition become. This goes to show that stones are not turned to bread by wishful thinking. There has to be a determined and purposive efforts towards the transformation of the human condition and reconstruction of the society. Thus, comes the position of this paper that societies are moved forward by those who can push beyond boundary lines through harnessing the metaphysical deposit from which all creativity flows. This of course, is another way of reemphasizing the need for societies to dedicate more resources and efforts for the development of the human mind owing to its unlimited fecundity to institute order in the midst of chaos. The postmodern dimension to metaphysics also has ethical implications in the sense that if Being is not fixed and truths are contingent, it means that we live with responsibility for the worlds we construct. Therefore, thinking metaphysically becomes less about eternal structures and more about openness to alterity, difference and responsibility. In essence, it becomes an exploration of the contingent, plural and constructed nature of reality while staying aware of the ethical weight of how we imagine and enact "what is".

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