

A CRITIQUE OF LOGICAL POSITIVISM AS A NEW DIMENSION OF HUMANISM AND THE SCIENTIFIC PARADIGM OF KNOWLEDGE

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Abstract

One very fundamental issue associated with the emergence or advent of logical positivism is that this philosophical movement with scientific orientation is characterized by plethora of absurdities and gross inconsistencies. We, as human beings, cannot really wipe out metaphysical realities. Logical analysis of propositional statements could be appropriate in our linguistic experiences but it is not just enough even what we claim to be accurate, precise, and certain in our logical statements may not be really so. There is no perfection in our linguistic analysis and what cannot be described by language should be outrightly discarded. Language has a fundamental functionalist assumption and use function of describing our world of reality. No philosophical theory is sacrosanct. Every philosophical problem and every theoretical analysis has its own inherent inadequacies or gross inconsistencies and shortcomings. Although, there are some senses in the philosophical movement of the analytical movement or logical positivists. Sense data, verifiability, falsifiability, certainty, precision, and accuracy remain the basis of experiential knowledge. This paper adopts the method of analysis in unravelling the various forces of arguments that were actually postulated or asserted by the logical positivists, otherwise known as members of the Vienna Circle. This paper concludes that sense data remains the basis of our experiential knowledge and metaphysics cannot be completely eroded or wiped out. Logic remains the essence of philosophy. Science is subject to public scrutiny and logical positivism is a new dimension of humanism.

Keywords: Humanism, Logical Positivism, Proposition, Science, Verification Principle, Metaphysics.

Introduction

Analytic philosophy which has to do with the advent of logical positivism as a philosophical movement and metaphysical realities are some of the forms of knowledge that are two different ways of doing philosophy. Logical positivism is deeply rooted in philosophical analysis and analysis therefore was to serve as a prophylactic against

linguistic abuses.¹ However, it is noteworthy to assert that analytic philosophy and metaphysics as variance of the source, of world of reality are like two sides of a coin. Logical positivism as a philosophical movement has its own inherent inadequacies, shortcomings and gross inconsistencies.

Moreover, no philosophical theory could be regarded as sacrosanct. Every philosophical theory, problem and analysis has its own logical inconsistency; so also is logical positivism. Logical positivists base their philosophical arguments on sense data, verifiability, falsifiability, certainty, precision, and accuracy. Logical positivists claim to toe the line of science. Science or scientific knowledge always starts from the point of view of speculation, hypothesis and empirical observations and experimentation. All scientific exercise starts from hypothesis, experimentation or testability, conclusion and such a conclusion must be subjected to public scrutiny.

Nevertheless, the emergence or advent of logical positivism is that this philosophical movement is basically characterized by scientific orientation and methodological assumptions. The logical positivists claim that all metaphysical realities should be completely wiped out or discarded, because they are all illusion or sophistry looking at it from David Hume's perspective. Logical positivists claim that logical analysis of propositional statements could be appropriate in our linguistic expressions or experiences if they pass through scientific methodology; but it is not just enough even what we claim to be accurate, precise, and certain, in our logical statements may not be really so.

To treat exhaustively what we propose, this paper is divided into five subsections. Section one focuses on the introductory remarks. Section two aims at the conceptual clarification of logical positivism as a new dimension of humanism. Section three is anchored on logical positivism as a scientific paradigm of knowledge. However, section four talks about the evaluative appraisal of logical positivism as a new form of humanism; and section five anchors on the concluding considerations.

Logical Positivism: A New Dimension of Humanism

Humanism is a must philosophy of life. Its emphasis is on the human, the here- and- now, the humane.² For Corliss Larmont, in his work, *Philosophy of Humanism*, humanism is the viewpoint that people have but one life to live and should make the most of it in terms of creative work and happiness.³ Accordingly, AsodunFatai, on the other hand, posits that:

The ethics of Humanism is already benefitting every fields of research. Humanism presupposes a morally sensitive area of human endeavour. Humanism is gradually assuming a factual significance and humanism presupposes the contributions to human welfare and this cannot be overemphasized in our contemporary times. The philosophy of humanism brings to the fore that like the “human being” which constitutes its primary focus, the term “humanism” can be slippery and controversial to

pin down.⁴

Nonetheless, the logical positivists assert that any linguistic analysis or expression or propositional statements that cannot be described by language should be out rightly wiped out or discarded. Language is nothing but human non-instinctual act; it is learnt. Language is a means of communicating ideas and thought. The end of philosophy of language is to ensure clarity, distinctness and cogency in our picture of reality through language.⁵ Language, itself, from the Wittgensteinian standpoint, pictures the world. The picturization of the world through language makes language to have a functionalist foundation. According to the Wittgensteinian tradition, language remains the only avenue in which we communicate cognitive knowledge. The logical positivist notion of language or propositional statements presupposed that the philosophy of language has two dimensions such as logical dimension and epistemological assumptions.

Broadly speaking, language has a functionalist assumption and empirical dimension. Language has a use- function of describing our world of reality and it is subdivided into ordinary language and ideal language. Those exponents that belong to ordinary language tradition are Gilbert Ryle, J.L Austin, P. F Strawson while those exponents that belong to the ideal language theory are Bertrand Russell, G.E.Moore, Rudolf Carnap and Ludwig Wittgenstein. The major exponents of logical positivism as a philosophical movement are known as logical positivists otherwise known as members of the Vienna Circle.

Moreover, the major advocates of logical positivism are August Comte, Alfred Jules Ayer, Moritz Schlick, RuldolfCarnap, Otto Neurath, Friedrich Waismann, Herbert Feigl, Kurt Godel, and the host of others. Logical positivism as a philosophical movement is characterized by attendant scientific rigorosity in reasoning. Logical positivism focuses or beams its search light on the logical clarification of meaning and truth in language. The notion of the philosophy of language is characterized by basic concepts. These concepts include similarity, truth, proposition, philosophy, verifiability criterion, reference, meaning, names, words, sentence; such as interrogative, imperative, optative and declarative sentences, logical atomism, logical positivism, denotation, and connotation. In order to have a full grasp of these basic concepts of philosophy of language, it is germane to breakdown these concepts to their basic components. Similarity simply means the state of being similar. Truth, on the other hand has different types such as correspondence, coherent, pragmatic and reliability theory. The whole objective of philosophy is to attain the objectivity of truth. On the other hand, proposition is a statement that is true or false and in which everything is clearly specified.⁶

Furthermore, we cannot completely erode metaphysical realities. Moore in consonance with Kant believes that sense data is external and not in the mind as Berkeley would want us to believe. However, experiencing and the experienced are two different things. Things continue to exist even when they are not perceived.⁷ Kant had argued that a rigorous science of metaphysics was impossible. Metaphysics belongs to the realm or the class of noumena (things-in-themselves) and the realm of the phenomena (things as they appear). The noumena belong to the realm of antinomies where there is logical and

empirical determination of truth and falsity of relevant knowledge claims and meaning. The logical positivists claim that metaphysical statements are meaningless statements and much of the words and other fields of knowledge or disciplines cannot be clearly analysed because to say the least, are completely or entirely ambiguous, vague, and misleading.

Nevertheless, the logical positivists assert that propositional statements or ordinary language is characterised by systematically misleading expression and language is for the most part misleading and inappropriate in carrying out the business of philosophy, hence, the logical positivists sought to provide solution to these abuses of language through their method of scientific orientation called the verification principle, the ability to demarcate between meaningful statements from meaningless statements or propositional statements.

Worthy of note is that we can therefore call the logical positivists' effort at clarifying meaning and truth as their verifiability theory of meaning; we must be able to clarify or specify the way in which propositional statements can be empirically verified through empirical observations. Propositional statements are therefore meaningful if we can specify possible present or the future observations which can verify such propositional statements. Propositional statements which can either be true or false. The verifiability criterion or verification principle aims at distinguishing meaningful statements from meaningless statements.

Moreover, the logical positivists assert that metaphysics belongs to these meaningless statements. The logical positivists posit that metaphysics is the cause of the stunted growth that philosophy has suffered. This was why Immanuel Kant had bundled metaphysical statements into the realm of what Kant called “antinomies”. Kant further asserted that a science of metaphysics is ultimately impossible, and it belongs to sophistry or illusion. The logical positivists are philosophers, logicians, scientists and mathematicians. Worthy of note is that the logical positivists had the background of logic and mathematics and due to this logical and mathematical background gave them the philosophical impetus in their argumentations on truth and language. For the logical positivist, logic is the essence of philosophy.⁸

Nonetheless, the logical positivists intensified the complete elimination of metaphysics and the human being is confronted by different aspects and types of reality; and through the senses, the human being experiences material reality, very much variegated.⁹ Accordingly, Iroegbu sees metaphysics as that branch of philosophy that studies reality as such i.e in its most comprehensive scope and fundamental principles.¹⁰ On the other hand, the logical positivists identified metaphysical statements as lying outside the classes of meaningful statements and logic. Logic simply means distinguishing between correct statements from indirect statements. The aim of the logical positivists is analytic, that is, analysing sentences and to re-examining the usage of words which will bring about clarity, precision and certainty. We cannot completely

eliminate metaphysics. Metaphysics is necessary; and it remains a part and parcel of the coping of human knowledge experience. There is absolutely no perfect language. The whole objective of the logical positivists was targeted at providing a perfect language or linguistic analysis or transparency. The question of empirical and metaphysical reality has been embedded in outright controversy. Metaphysical knowledge or realities such as God, angels, soul cannot be a mere illusion.

In addition, the observations of physical things cannot be the only significant raw data of human knowledge. Metaphysical realities cannot be said to be beating of the wings as asserted by Kant. Language in order to serve as language must be communicable, analysable, certain, precise and accurate. However, authentic philosophy, for it to be qualified as philosophy cannot be only concerned with the role of science. Authentic philosophy cannot be a purified science; it could take both a metaphysical and empirical rigidity. The verification principle has fallen short of its own standards and as such cannot be effectively used in verifying sentences or propositional statements.

For Russell, philosophy must give a realistic account of the world. Russell posits further that philosophy remains a close associate of logic and mathematics. The logical implication of this Russellian philosophical position is that all sound philosophy should begin with an analysis of propositions. Logic is the essence of philosophic enterprise. Logical positivism is deeply rooted in the objective of logic and mathematical truth; and logic is an instrument or organ for appraising the correctness of reasoning.¹¹ Simpson in consonance with Dukor sees logic as the science of formal principles of reasoning or correct inference.¹² On the other hand, the logical positivists adopt the method of analysis in clarifying propositional statements. The logical positivists' account of reality is grossly inadequate in the face of the development of scientific progression. Propositions about state of affairs will continue to be limited. In our limited world, meaningful statements are invariably limited; some things in the world are verifiable which some metaphysical and empirical realities such as freedom, soul, angels, God and heaven are unverifiable. Some words as sentences in our language game have their determinate meanings. Linguistic analysis which is one of the tenets of logical positivism is basically aimed at solving human predicament. According to Wisnewski:

The Wittgensteinian approach as adopted by the logical positivists captured something the human predicament. We must constantly struggle to achieve clarity about our relation to the world, about our relation to each other, and even about our relations to ourselves. The way to achieve this is, of course, perspicuous representation-and this can be achieved by engaging in a type of phenomenological analysis. We must investigate the value-orientation that constitutes our form of life and it is only in this way that we will see our lives clearly.¹³

Mondin in consonance with Wisnewski posits that language has a linguistic turn. For Mondin the linguistic turn has drawn into its spiral all the fields of philosophy. The linguistic turn has gone beyond all the fields of philosophy, the linguistic turn has also involved all the philosophical movements and in general all the movements of thought of

our time. The fundamental questions of linguistic abuses are not borne of things but of the linguistical confusion.¹⁴ Mondin further posits that to resolve them it suffices to use the therapy of a correct analysis of language. From this position of the Vienna circle the direction of the “linguistic turn” has been taken, a direction that has become the dominant characteristic of the philosophy of our time.¹⁵

Nonetheless, language is not only a tool for communicating extra linguistic facts. The verification principle on its own is unverifiable. However, philosophy should be developed into a rigorous science.¹⁶ However, the logical positivists seem to forget that sentences are used to perform different functions apart from depicting reality either rightly or wrongly. Language could have an interrogative, declarative, optative and imperative function. Language has a functionalist assumption. The logical positivist as a philosophical movement is sequel to Hume's destruction of metaphysics thus placing metaphysical and empirical reality in scepticism.

Russell, posits, that sceptical doubt, both with respect to reason and the senses, is a malady, which can never be radically cured, but must return upon us every moment. Russell posits further that in all the incidents of life we ought still to prefer our scepticism. It is said that proposition which is unverifiable has no meaning; that verification depends upon precepts. The verification principle as postulated by the logical positivists is characterized by a myriad of absurdities; and its connection with knowledge is difficult and complex. Our world of reality is limited and as posited by Bertrand Russell, there are things in the world other than us and our private experience. And that the whole outer world is nothing but a fantasy or a dream.¹⁷ Be that as it may, logical positivism is saddled with the sole objective in using scientific methodology in evaluating and explaining words, meanings and logical truth.

Logical Positivism as a Scientific Paradigm of Knowledge

Logical positivism is characterized by attendant rigorosity in reasoning. Contrary to the views of the logical positivists, metaphysics was not therefore, a completely useless sphere of knowledge. One fundamental factor to note is that the process to the acquisition of knowledge is not statement but progressive. Logical positivism entails usefulness, certainty, utility and precision of words and sentences or propositions. Logical positivism aims at the method of analysis.¹⁸ One fundamental fact logical positivists have to note, is that things will continue to exist even when they are not perceived.¹⁹ For Omoregbe, logical positivism otherwise known as neo-positivism is a contemporary philosophical school which dates back to the classical positivism of August Comte, the nineteenth century philosopher and founder of sociology. Logical positivism can be seen as a twentieth century development of classical positivism.²⁰

Furthermore, lack of proper analysis is the bane of traditional philosophy which has taken a lot of things for granted. Logical analysis means the clarification of concepts and the clarification of concepts remains the basis or business of philosophy. The role of philosophy, according to the Wittgenstein is the clarification of concepts. The role of

philosophy, according to the Wittgenstein is the critique of language. Propositions should be able to depict facts in the world.²¹ According to Lawhead, logical positivism is a twentieth century version of empiricism and a version of analytic philosophy which states that (1) logical and mathematical statements are logically necessary statements (tautologies) that do not provide information about the world and (2) factual statements are meaningful only if they are capable of being verified in sense experience (verifiability principle).²²

Moreover, logical positivism aims at the logical clarification of meaning in language and truth. Logical positivism as a methodology was adopted in the field of science as a way of ensuring that scientific statements are made meaningful. They stressed that this can be done by expunging metaphysical statements from science.²³ Positivism is a philosophical movement formed around Moritz Schlick, the eminent propagator of the movement. It is a philosophical school of thought which was concerned with eliminating metaphysics in all its ramifications.²⁴ For Iroegbu, positivism embodies religion and the object of positivistic religion is humanity itself. Logical positivism also denied God and all metaphysical reality. Meaningful propositions are either empirically verifiable or tautologies, therefore metaphysical statements like God, spirit, causality and after-life are senseless because they are totally outside of experience.²⁵ However, positivism is a new form of humanistic philosophy. According to Ozumba, logical positivism is rooted in the philosophy of August Comte who enunciated three basic epochs of developments of knowledge. These involve: (1) The religious (theological) knowledge. This form of knowledge is characterized by superstition and appeal to the supernatural. (2) The metaphysical knowledge is characterized by philosophical speculation about reality beyond the realm of the physical. (3) The scientific epoch, this is characterized by the ideal stage of human cognitive development.²⁶

Moreover, the age of science, is the age of reason; it is taken to be devoid of the superstition of religion and the empty speculations of metaphysics. Metaphysics is an area of philosophy that pursues questions about the nature of reality.²⁷ The logical positivists argue that any empirical knowledge that does not come in the form of observable science or mathematics is empty, speculative and nonsensical. Logical positivism is a movement formed in the 1920s by a group of scientifically minded philosophers and mathematicians. The initial drive was to see how to make most disciplines emulate the exactness of the scientific enterprise. Logical positivism is also known as logical empiricism. Empiricism means the theory that knowledge is obtained solely from sense experience.²⁸ However, the emergence of the logical positivist was strongly influenced by the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein. Worthy of note is that Wittgenstein exerted enormous influence on the logical positivists – even though he was not a member of the movement.²⁹

Moreover, he, in pursuit of a critical philosophy akin to that of Kant, impacted the same critical bent on to the logical positivists; and things belonged to the class of noumena (things-in-themselves) and the realm of antinomies where there is no logical and

empirical determination of the truth and falsity of relevant knowledge claims. Wittgenstein had asserted in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* that the meaning of a proposition is its correspondence to a definite state of affairs. The structure of the world was seen as determining the structure of language. This was the picture theory of language as asserted by him. Philosophical problems are actually tied to linguistic problems. However, the logical positivists became concerned with formulating a criterion of demarcation; a demarcation between meaningful and meaningless statements. In the words of Rudolf Carnap, the proper task of philosophy is logical analysis. Much of the words and sentences used in philosophy and other disciplines cannot be clearly analyzed because they are to say the least ambiguous, vague and misleading.³⁰ The logical positivists argue that philosophy is often thought of as a discipline preoccupied with abstruse and abstract ideals, and therefore disconnected from the 'real world'.³¹ For Vassilopoulou, philosophy is often seen as an intellectual endeavour where conceptual precision is both a prerequisite and an objective, where truths are to be expressed in as literary statements as possible and where the laws of logic are omnipresent.³² Ozumba alluding to the philosophical position of Gilbert Ryle, argues that ordinary language is characterized by systematically misleading expressions and ordinary language is for the most part misleading and inappropriate in carrying on the business of philosophy; and the business of philosophy is the clarification of concepts. However, the worry of both philosophers and scientists that something needed to be done in order to sanitise our language or linguistic confusions. The need for a prophylactic against linguistic abuses was highly needed at this time. The logical positivist sought to provide fundamental solution to these fundamental problems of abuses of language through their method called the verification principle.³³ Accordingly, Ozumba further heightens his theoretical position by asserting that:

The verification principle is the criterion for determining the meaningfulness or literal significance of a proposition. This verification principle gave rise to what is called verifiability criterion. This is the criterion for demarcating meaningful from – meaningless proposition. However, systematically speaking, verification connotes the actual verification of propositions (verification in a strong sense) while verifiability suggests possibility of being verified. ... we have the strong and weak versions of the – verification principle. We can therefore call the logical positivists' effort at the clarification of language, truth and meaning as their verifiability theory of meaning. The verification principle was adopted because the logical positivists wanted to give philosophy a scientific orientation.³⁴

Lawhead in consonance with Ozumba asserts that verification principle is the criterion of meaning developed by the logical positivists stating that (1) a factual statement has cognitive meaning only if sense experience can provide evidence of its truth and (2) the experiences that would demonstrate its truth are identical to its meaning.³⁵ Broadly

speaking, the assumption behind this verification principle must always rest upon empirical observations. The criterion of verifiability therefore follows from the principle of verification. The principle of verification brings about the principle of significance; and this principle of significance usually referred to as the principle of cognitive significance.³⁶ Accordingly, Lawhead argues that cognitive meaning refers to the informative content of a statement that asserts a claim that may be either true or false. The cognitive meaning of a statement is sometimes contrasted with its emotive meaning or the emotional attitude it expresses or evokes.³⁷

Worthy of note is that contemporary logical empiricism or positivism as we have already x-rayed in this theoretical discourse carries with it the germs of empiricism. By this we mean that experience and physical corroboration play big role in the acceptance of states of affairs. This simply means that mentalistic activities can be interpreted in physicalistic terms. This assertion allows us to accept the fact that psychological statements as meaningful statements expose the principle of significance to the problem of having to admit metaphysical statements as meaningful.³⁸ According to Stumpf, any proposition, therefore, that could not be verified by the method of empirical observations would be said to have no meaning. The verification principle demands that for any proposition to be meaningful, we must be able to specify – the way in which it can be – empirically verified.³⁹ However, the strong version of the verification principle states that a proposition is meaningful if conducive grounds are provided for its observation. This means that all statements not referring to immediate datum of experience are considered nonsensical; the absurdity of this strong version is clear. The weak version coheres more with the spirit of verifiability criterion and the principle of confirmability. This view states that we need not insist on conclusive verification before meaningfulness is permitted in all propositional statements.⁴⁰

Moreover, a proposition is therefore meaningful if we can specify possible present or future observations which can verify the statement. A proposition is a statement which has a definite truth-value. This means that it can be true or false. A proposition must contain a thought which either agrees (conforms) or does not conform to reality or states of affairs. Propositions are contingent statements.⁴¹ For instance, a contingent statement is one whose truth is not logically necessary.⁴² However, they need only be conceptually, - hypothetically and conceivably possible. For example, the statements such as: “there exist humans in the moon, is meaningful only if we can specify what observations are needed to verify it and the King of France is bald are meaningful statements that need to be verified.” Meaningfulness deals with verifiability, falsifiability and confirmability. The logical positivists hold that theories are the key to systematic scientific enterprise although such theories must be rid of metaphysical entities or metaphysical sentences or metaphysical reasons.⁴³

Furthermore, the weak version of logical positivist permits that mere indication of the possibility of confirmability and conceivability means possibility of verification.⁴⁴ On the

other hand, the strong version of verification requires complete verifiability while the weak version only requires the specification of observations that would count for or against the statement, which would serve to confirm or disconfirm it to a certain extent.⁴⁵ The weak version is often to be better represented in confirmability criterion of meaningfulness. The basic level of meaningfulness and significance include analytic statement and synthetic statements. For Lawhead, analytic statement is a statement in which the predicate is contained within the subject (its truth is based on the meaning and relationship of its terms) and its denial result in a logical contradictions for example, all members are parents contrasted with synthetic statement.⁴⁶ On the other hand, analytic statements are said to be meaningful by virtue of the meaning of composite words independent of experience, whereas, synthetic statements are meaningful or significant because they can be verified through reason and experience.⁴⁷ According to Umeogu, experience is an essential part of all empirical knowledge and empiricism is significant on two complementary notes: (1) as a theory of knowledge and (2) as a theory of meaning.⁴⁸ Moreover, synthetic statement is a statement in which the predicate adds information to the subject that is not logically contained within it and in which its denial (even if false) does not result in a logical contradictions, for instance, all members are under fifty feet tall is a synthetic statement contrasted with analytic statement.⁴⁹ However, the laws of science are of the general form every object that is thrown up comes down, therefore, all objects that go up come down. We move from several instances to general inferences. These inferences are often reached on the basis of limited empirical observation.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, the logical positivists shared a common conviction about the standards required in philosophic excursions and scientific enterprise. The logical positivist saw in science a veritable tool that can be applied across board to put an end to the unnecessary hassling that have come to characterized philosophic enterprise. The logical positivists believe that what should be done therefore is to model all statements along the observable. However, the aim of the logical positivists as articulated in their principle of verification is to sever metaphysics from all domains of knowledge or empiricism.⁵¹ Moreover, they identified metaphysics, as the cause of the stunted growth that philosophy has suffered for years. Any statement that does not meet the test of verification criterion has to be regarded as meaningless. In essence, therefore, only experience is regarded as the acceptable source of knowledge; all apriori reasoning is as a result rendered suspect. A priori statement is a type of knowledge, statement or concept whose content and truth can be known prior to or independently of experience. For example, some philosophers believe that “two plus two equals four” and “every event has a cause” are apriori truths which cannot be proven by experience.⁵² By the postulations of the logical positivists, philosophy came to be seen as a questionable field of study. Logical positivism in essence could be classed as a school of philosophy of science which in the 1920s and 1930s adopted a methodological framework that dominated science at this time.⁵³

In addition, the logical positivists saw the problem of science and philosophy as lying in language. They wanted to streamline language by removing all terms or word that yield statements which cannot be verified. The logical positivist aims at maintaining a logically consistent approach they set out to adopt a method for determining the meaningfulness or otherwise of scientific and philosophical propositions. It was through what they called principle of verification that they sought to achieve onerous task of philosophic enterprise. The verification principle aims at distinguishing meaningful statements from meaningless statements.⁵⁴

What is of prominent relief here is that logical empiricism presupposes a law for forming – proposition. A hypothesis is potentially testable or verifiable and when it is verified it becomes a proposition. While the principle of verification deals with the 'what' of meaning, verifiability criterion deals with the 'how' of meaning. Logical positivism is actually predicated on verification principle – sense data. On the other hand, sense data is a term used to refer to the particular, individual impressions received in sensation, such as particular colours, tastes, sounds, odours, and textures. Reference to sense data need not presuppose anything about their cause.⁵⁵ Contemporary logical empiricism or positivism carries with it the germs of empiricism. The logical positivist cannot be talking in terms of falsity because metaphysical statements, in the main, are neither true nor false. We cannot prove or disprove them. This was why Kant had to bundle metaphysical statements into the realm of what he called “antinomies” and consequently, asserted that a science of metaphysics is ultimately impossible.⁵⁶ According to Lawhead, antinomy is a pair of seemingly reasonable conclusions that flatly contradicts each other and hence cannot both be true. Kant used antinomies to argue that reason contradicts itself when it reaches beyond its proper limits in attempting to answer traditional metaphysical questions about the nature of reality.⁵⁷

Moreover, the logical positivists are not the only philosophers, scientists and mathematicians who happened to be ardent critics or opponents of metaphysics. Put differently, the call for the expunging of all metaphysics did not however, start with the logical positivists of the Vienna Circle. There have been many opponents of metaphysics starting from the Greek sceptics to the British empiricists of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries. David Hume in the Eighteenth century regarded all metaphysics as consisting in sterile inquiries.⁵⁸

Broadly speaking, he saw metaphysics as the handmaid of sophistry and illusion. With the advent of logical positivism and the adoption of logical analysis as their methodological framework, and the call for the complete elimination of metaphysics was intensified. Logical positivists identified metaphysical statements as lying outside the classes of meaningful statements. For the logical positivists – meaningful statements are tautologous which do not picture any reality (like mathematical statements) but are used to transform factual statements. Logical positivists depend solely on observable data of experience and facts.⁵⁹ On the other hand tautology represents a state that is true because

of its logical form e. g “X is identical to X”.⁶⁰

Furthermore, one logical truth is that, metaphysics is indispensable at least in philosophy; and science itself cannot be completely free of metaphysics as the logical positivists seem to pose. Metaphysics is defined as the science of pure being. Metaphysics is therefore the science of ultimate reality. It is the science that concerns itself with first principles and reality in general. Every philosophical thought and analysis has some metaphysical underpinning. However, every system of thought has been branded as metaphysics because even when we pretend to have removed metaphysics, we find that we still seek to get at the fundamentals of our position i. e, we try to account for their irreducible substructure of which our worldview is based and that exercise in itself is metaphysics.⁶¹ Be that as it may, metaphysics is therefore all pervasive in man's quest for a better and deeper understanding of the universe. The aim of the logical positivists is analytical, that is, to analyse sentences and to critically examine the usage of words which will bring about clarity of purpose or purity of intention and thus serve as a new theoretical approach in solving the traditional problems that feature in philosophical discussion or analysis.

Moreover, to the logical positivists something is real through being – incorporated into the total structure of experience. Logical positivists like the empiricists were suspicious of abstract entities like properties, classes, relations, numbers, propositions, etc.⁶² Metaphysics is seen as the heart of philosophy. According to Barnes, metaphysics is described as the heart of philosophy. Be that as it may, metaphysics is seen as a necessary part of the corpus of human knowledge. The verification principle is nothing more than a recommendation which may or may not be accepted. The verification principle is meaningless; it does not stand the test of time.⁶³ According to Alfred Jules Ayer cited by Ozumba, all empirical statements are hypothetical. The verification principle has fallen short of its own empirical standards cum scientific grounding and as such cannot efficaciously be used in verifying sentences or propositional statements. However, the verification principle has been debunked by many scholars and theorists.

Moreover, it is therefore clear that by introducing language game in which words are seen as tools in a language box which can serve different purposes. Verification principle which served as a theory of meaning has been debunked. Words now serve different functions depending on the use the user wants to put them. And since they are not stable, we really cannot verify them realizing that the words can picture many states of affairs or convey different senses depending on how they are used.⁶⁴ Nonetheless, propositions about states of affairs will continue to be limited because human knowledge itself is limited. Meaningful statements are tautologies, and they presuppose contradictions of observable data of experience. Things in the world are not conclusively and exclusively verifiable. However, the verification principle must therefore be seen as a barren principle that has not been able to serve the purpose for which it was formulated.⁶⁵ Moreover, the logical positivist movement reflects on the need for solid bedrock of empirical observations and logical investigation into the meaning of language and truth. However, words and sentences of a language have their determinate meanings. The logical positivists'

conception of philosophy has to do with precision, accuracy and certainty. The verification principle as a theory of meaning has its shortcomings. The verification principle, when fully considered, it is seen to be destructive of the meaning which it purports to protect. Thus, it does by disregarding the fact that language is not only a tool for communicating extra-linguistic facts.⁶⁶ Worthy of note is that, the verification principle, itself cannot be verified. Logical positivism loses sight of the fact that meaning is about sentences and not about the changing thought that sentences are used to convey.⁶⁷

Furthermore, the logical positivists also seem to forget that sentences are used to do or perform different functions apart from that of depicting reality rightly or wrongly. However, we have the interrogative, declarative, optative, imperative or commanding function of language. The logical positivist movement is sequel to David Hume's destruction of empiricism and metaphysical reasoning.⁶⁸ Hume divided all ideas, truths and the likes into matters of fact ones and relation of ideas ones.⁶⁹ The logical positivist view on empirical knowledge is a sceptical one. According to Russell, sceptical doubt, both with respect to reason and the senses, is a malady, which can never be radically cured, but must return upon us every moment. However, we may chase it away, and sometimes we may seem entirely free from it ... In all the incidents of life we ought to still preserve our scepticism.⁷⁰ Russell further heightens his theoretical position by asserting that:

There is, however, another kind of argument, which while it does not establish idealism as a metaphysic, does, it is valid, establish it as a practical policy. It is said that a proposition which is unverifiable has no meaning; that verification depends upon precepts; and that, therefore, a proposition about anything except actual or possible precepts is meaningless. I think that this view, strictly interpreted, would confine us to speak about anything that we have not ourselves explicitly noticed. If so, it is a view that no one can hold in practice, which is a principal defect in a theory that is advocated on practical grounds. The whole question of verification and its connection with knowledge is difficult and complex.⁷¹

Moreover, the verification principle as postulated by the logical positivists is characterized by a myriad of absurdities. Russell asserts that this seems plainly absurd; but whoever wishes to become a philosopher must learn not to be frightened by absurdities. Russell believes that there are in the world things other than ourselves and our private experiences.⁷² Russell further asserts that it may be that the whole outer world is nothing but a dream.⁷³ Logical positivism aims at using scientific methodology in explaining words, meanings, language and truth; but science is not everything; science is not enough to explain reality of things and science becomes remote from human experience and in the case of cognitive science, generates a divided stance in which we are led to affirm consequences that we appear to be constitutionally incapable of accepting. Varela in consonance with Russell argues that the affirmation or non-affirmation of human knowledge is basically anchored on our acceptance of our beliefs or

non-justification of those beliefs system.⁷⁴ However, the humanism of logical positivism is all about the justification of scientific or empirical knowledge that is aimed at human betterment.

Evaluative Appraisal

The theoretical position of the logical positivists is fraught with logical inconsistencies and inadequacies. For Umeogu, inconsistency in philosophies is as old as philosophy itself. From the time of the earliest recorded history of philosophy, this subtle, insidious, astray-leading corrigendum, inconsistency, has always been made manifest by philosophers by pointing out the errors in the theories, propositions and systems of philosophers.⁷⁵ On the other hand, the tenet of the logical positivists is characterized by both strengths and weaknesses. Logical positivism means the method of analysis that clarifies language and to rescue philosophy from the bewitchment of language or linguistic abuses. One of the strengths of the logical positivists is that philosophy has a practical end or what Jeremy Winewski calls practicality function.⁷⁶ Logical positivism, is therefore, characterized by internal inconsistencies and logical inadequacies despite the growing need for a more scientific explanation of propositions in meanings, words and truths. The logical positivists' account of reality is grossly inadequate in the face of the developments of scientific progression, mathematical and logical truths. For Umeogu, the mathematical logical philosophy of Frege, Russell and Whitehead which unconcealed and unclosed the element of necessity in mathematics, by reducing mathematical truths to analytic relations, gave rise to the happening of Vienna positivists; Schlick, Carnap, Ayer and others. Theirs was a logical empiricism also known as logical positivism. For them, the two classes of cognitively meaningful statements/propositions are: those whose truth-value can be shown by an appeal to experience and others whose meaningfulness is deducible by reference to logic.⁷⁷ Accordingly, Umeogu further heightens his theoretical position by asserting that:

The empiricism of logical positivism, which is not less than a careful restatement of Hume's philosophy in a form known as the "Verification Principle" which sees as cognitively meaningful only and only those statements or propositions that are in principle at least verifiable by reference to sense-experience. Wittgenstein, who partly due to Russell's influence thought that every proposition is a picture of facts, came later in his "*Philosophical Investigations*", when he remarkably differed from Russell, to abandon the picture-analogy and to conceive of language as an activity involving the use of words as tools. For Wittgenstein, it will suffice for now to remark that, language however way it goes or comes must forever have empirical assumptions; empirical assumptions which Chomsky criticized with his innate hypothesis for the structure of our languages.⁷⁸

Thus, for Russell, if philosophy must give a realistic account of the world, then it has to remain a close associate of logic and mathematics.⁷⁹ However, the practical implication of

this statement for Bertrand Russell is that all sound philosophy should begin with an analysis of propositional statements. Logic is the essence of philosophy. Ozumba alluding to the Russellian tradition asserts that only proper analysis of words will lead us to the fundamental principle that represents reality. A perfect language is itself unrealizable. The whole programme of logical positivism was based on providing a perfect language that will reveal reality to us holistically.⁸⁰ According to Omoregbe, language pictures the world and the scope of language extends as far as (but no further than) the world of empirical experience.⁸¹

In addition, the fundamental question of reality as we know it is one that has actually been embedded in controversy right from antiquity. Nobody knows what it is or the path that leads to it. It appears to be that which is forever barricaded from our sight. This boils down to the fact that any talk about perfect language is a utopian demand and any attempt to talk about reality is elusive. Metaphysical knowledge or reality cannot be swept under the carpet. The idea of God, for instance, is not an illusion because the belief in God is actually based on rational foundation. According to John Hick:

It is entirely reasonable, rational, and proper to believe wholeheartedly in the reality of God; and there is no attempt to demonstrate the existence of God. The issue is not whether it can be established as an item of indubitable public knowledge that God (or the Divine or the Transcendent) exists, or most probably exists, but whether it is rational for those who experience some of life's moments theistically to believe that God exists and to proceed to conduct their lives on this basis.⁸²

Furthermore, the existence, nature or the essence of God belongs to the realm of metaphysics. The fundamental issue of the existence or otherwise of God is that it influences human value base in living out one's life on earth. Such a value base must be acceptable by humans otherwise the knowledge of reality may not be understood as it should. Metaphysics, for the logical positivists, was identified with the unobservable but the emphasis now had shifted to the observables as the only significant raw data of knowledge. Since metaphysics did not satisfy this important criterion, it had to be swept under the carpet. Kant had described metaphysics as the beating of wings in the void. For any language to be constructed, it has to come from a perfect linguistic analysis.⁸³ Worthy of note is that metaphysical reality is part and parcel of our existence. For G.E Moore, metaphysicians have, therefore, the great merit of insisting that our knowledge is not confined to the things which we can touch and see and feel. They have always been much occupied, not only with that other class of natural objects which consists in mental facts, but also with the class of objects or properties of objects, which certainly do not exist in time, are not therefore parts of Nature, and which in fact, do not exist at all.⁸⁴

Nonetheless, sense data is described as the basis of our experiential knowledge. This means that knowledge will become irretrievably a private phenomenon since not two

persons can have the same sense data or experiential data and if we must build a language out of sense data, then it has to be strictly private. Language in order to serve as language must be communicable. But any language that is constituted out of sense data will surely culminate in “philosophical solipsism”.⁸⁵ According to Winewski, language reflects our participation in practices that existed long before we did. Language construed in this manner is much more than the froth atop of being-it is a constitutive part of the way we understand the world around us.⁸⁶ The logical positivists assert that the aim of philosophy; then is not to document what is, but also to highlight what can be.⁸⁷ Logical positivism, however, has the merit of having purified science, of any metaphysical confusion but because of its empirical rigidity; it is not in a position to strengthen the universality and necessity of science and its laws.⁸⁸ Logical positivism is mainly concerned with scientific progression and assimilation; and it is invariably a new form of humanistic philosophy. Worthy of note is that logical positivism is contextually- bound and the philosophical contexts of the logical positivists are deeply rooted in a constructive and transformative process- a creative philosophical process-rather than a process of accumulating data or storing arguments.⁸⁹ However, logical positivism is a form of new consciousness that is deeply rooted in scientific paradigm or scientific explanation of reality. However, consciousness is a world of its own with invisible mansions, moods, musings and mysteries; to prove it is difficult but not impossible. To prove it might require an agreement between mysticism and science.⁹⁰ Logical positivism is all about the paradigm shift in human way of empirical consciousness.

Concluding Considerations

Having critically examined the concept of logical positivism as a new form of humanistic philosophy and the scientific paradigm of knowledge, this paper, therefore, concludes that there are some senses in the philosophical excursion of the analytical movement or logical positivists or logical empiricism. Sense data, verifiability, falsifiability, certainty, precision, and accuracy remain the bases of experiential knowledge. Metaphysics cannot be completely swept under the carpet in our quest for knowledge acquisition. Logic remains the essence of philosophical exposition. Science is subject to public scrutiny. Logical positivism got its workings from the methodological principle of logical and mathematical truths; and its major objective is the clarification of concepts. The logical positivists drew their inspiration from the Wittgensteinian tradition. The logical positivists were more concerned with philosophy taking the role of science. Science is considered at the moment to be more or less authentic philosophy. On the other hand, logical positivism reduced philosophy to science because according to its philosophical standpoint, the only valid knowledge is that of fact. Conclusively, humanism is aimed at human welfare.

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