

Chapter 1

What Philosophy Is and Is Not

Philosophy is the birthbed of all knowledge. It is the mother of all sciences. It is the beginning of all searching and theorisation. This is premised on the idea that philosophy pursues questions in every dimension of human life and its techniques apply to problems in any field of study or endeavour. Basing on this understanding, it is generally accepted that no single definition expresses in fullness the richness and diversity of philosophy. This implies that philosophy may be described in many ways (APA 1981). That being the case, there are as many answers to the question “what is philosophy?” as there are philosophers. This is largely because the question asks more than one could answer. As that may, each philosopher seeks to define this disarmingly daunting question in his or her own unique conceptualisation and interpretation, hence the multiplicity of definitions. In view of this, different scholars from diverse ideological backgrounds and different historical epochs have attempted to proffer their own respective definitions of philosophy which, however, have all never been adequate and exhaustive enough to address the various nuances that fall within the confines of philosophy. Consequently, defining philosophy has proven to be an extremely an elusive task (even to the philosophers themselves) and challenging endeavour tantamount to chasing the wind.

The term “philosophy” has somehow become complicated to pin down or define with precision especially under one rubric. On this note, we concur with Schneider (2011) who in light of the challenges and controversies regarding the definition of philosophy argues that the word “philosophy” covers a wide continent, with unclear borders and regions. As alluded to above, it is evident that there is no one single sense

of the word philosophy. Precisely, there is no universally accepted definition of the word, thus, philosophy can be understood in a myriad of ways and can also be defined from a number of perspectives. In sync with this obtaining reality, Martin Heidegger (1956: 2) in his reflections on the nature of philosophy remarked that “we seem to live in such a time where contemporary philosophers share no unified conception of what philosophy has been or should become. In conformity with Heidegger, Peter van Inwagen (2004: 332) noted that disagreement in philosophy is pervasive and irresolvable. For this reason, Inwagen made the conclusion that there is almost no thesis in philosophy about which philosophers agree. Taking into account the complexities surrounding the definition of the term philosophy, many writers and scholars abandon the attempt to define philosophy and instead, turn to the kinds of things philosophers do and don’t do (see also Bryson 2009). The present chapter, thus, is a response to the dual question ‘what philosophy is and is not?’

Definition(s) of philosophy: An unfinished business

The word philosophy is derived from two Greek words: *philein* which means love and *sophia* which means wisdom (Deluze and Guattari 1994; Barnett 2008). These two words when joined together create the word philosophy which can be loosely translated to mean “the love for wisdom.” It is fundamental to set the record straight right from the onset that the definition of philosophy can be offered from a number of perspectives some wider and some narrower. As Sodipo (1973: 3) tells us philosophy is reflective and critical thinking about the concepts and principles people use to organise their experiences in religion, moral, social and political life, law, psychology, history and the natural sciences. As an academic discipline, philosophy exercises the principles of reason and logic in an attempt to understand reality and answer fundamental questions underpinning human lives in all realms

of existence. This conceptualisation of philosophy is corroborated by Deluze and Guattari (1994) who define philosophy as an activity that people undertake when they seek to understand fundamental truths about themselves and the world in which they live. Taking it from Deluze and Guattari, all disciplines generally qualify as philosophy as long as they seek to understand fundamental truths about some people and the world around. For Maziarz (1987), philosophy implies both the process of questioning and the results of this interrogation as embodied in a personal or public enterprise of value to mankind. A similar understanding is offered by Gyekye (1987) who understands philosophy as a conceptual response to basic issues and human problems. For scholars such as Honderich (1995: 666) and Quinton (1995), philosophy is a body of knowledge concerned with the general nature of the world (metaphysics or theory of existence), the justification of belief (epistemology or theory of knowledge), and the conduct of life (ethics or theory of value). Honderich and Quinton drew their definitions from the basic branches of philosophy such as metaphysics, logic, epistemology, ethics (moral philosophy).

According to Warburton (1999), the main concern of philosophy is to question and understand very common ideas that people take for granted and use every day without thinking about them. He gives examples of experts in different areas of study in terms of how they differ from a philosophy expert in view of their object of study, type of questions they ask, and their questioning style. He, thus, argues a historian may ask what happened at some time in the past, but a philosopher will ask, "What is time?" A mathematician may investigate the relations among numbers, but a philosopher will ask, "What is a number?" A physicist will ask what atoms are made up of or what explains gravity, but a philosopher will ask how we can know there is anything outside of our own minds. A psychologist may investigate how children learn a language, but a philosopher will ask, "What makes a word mean anything?" Anyone can ask whether it's wrong to sneak into a movie

without paying, but a philosopher will ask, “What makes an action right or wrong?” (Warburton 1999: 27). This understanding of philosophy is shared by Brandom (n.d) who argues that philosophy unpacks and evaluates notions that other disciplines take for granted. He in fact, argues that “when we engage in philosophical questioning, we throw ourselves into uncertainty about fundamental beliefs and concepts” (even if, as human beings, we remain deeply committed to those beliefs and concepts). Insofar as it involves refusing to take things for granted, philosophy is an exercise in rational autonomy. For a scholar such as Morris (1999), philosophy is more of an activity that utilises unique skills and methods of thinking in order to provide practical advice for living. Thus, Teichmann and Katherine (1999) define philosophy as: “a study of problems which are ultimate, abstract and very general” (p. 1). For them, these problems are concerned with the nature of existence, knowledge, morality, reason and human purpose.

Some scholars see philosophy as a double-edged discipline. Nussbaum (2000), for example, defines philosophy as an irritating gadfly that keeps asking questions about the core concepts-both its own (irritatingly, but valuably) as well as those of other disciplines and people. Regardless of their ultimate goals, philosophers probe foundational concepts to increase clarity; they have, in Nussbaum’s words, “a commitment to the critical scrutiny of arguments that makes them good at refining distinctions, detecting fallacies,” and understanding both sides in a dispute. For Priest (2006), “philosophy is precisely that intellectual inquiry in which anything is open to critical challenge and scrutiny” (p. 202). The critique-centred nature of philosophy serves to produce three features, on Priest’s account. Philosophy as: 1) subversive, 2) unsettling, and 3) of universal import (Priest 2006: 202-203). Presumably, because philosophers are prepared to challenge everyday common beliefs, philosophy is subversive. It is the making of challenges that shows philosophy’s universal import. There is no assumption a

philosopher cannot question and no position a philosopher cannot challenge, hence its unsettling nature. Add to that, Nyarwath (2010) postulates that philosophy is the discipline that seeks to address the most basic/fundamental principles/issues in the world concerning reality. Nyarwath went further asserting that philosophy asks questions that appear very obvious and are normally taken for granted. It is concerned about the existence of things, for instance, the existence of God, ideas, and other such entities. It also grapples with basic concepts such as justice, ultimate reality, truth, and others, thus it seeks to understand and establish certain fundamental principles (Nyarwath 2010).

Though there is no consensus on the finer details concerning the precise meaning of the term philosophy as highlighted above, some working and seemingly convincing definitions have been conjured up. Below are some of the five generally accepted definitions of philosophy:

(a) Philosophy is a way of simplifying complex ideas and statements about our experiences in life in order to make us understand them or make sense out of them.

(b) Philosophy is a rational attempt in finding solutions to fundamental problems of mankind.

(c) Philosophy is a constant and endless quest by human beings in trying to find out many riddles of the universe so that they can find out a meaningful framework for the expression of all thoughts, actions, and observable phenomena.

(d) Philosophy is what an individual accepts as his guiding principles, which prompt him/her to act, in different ways at different times, places and circumstances.

(e) Philosophy is a rational investigation which examines the nature and reasons behind events happening in the world. This understanding of philosophy is largely informed by what philosophers are known to do.

Basing on this discussion, the reader is bound to agree with us that it is not easy to pin down or define philosophy with in a precisely expected manner as it is an extremely broad term

covering a very wide range of intellectual activities. Again, the scope of the word ‘philosophy’ has itself varied considerably throughout history, not to mention the fact that there has probably never been a time at which it meant the same thing to everyone (Craig 2002). Recently, something rather strange has happened to it. On the one hand, it has become so broad as to be close to meaningless, as when almost every commercial organisation speaks of itself as having a philosophy – usually meaning a policy. Similarly, philosophy has been spoken of as a way of life for both individuals and groups such it has become difficult to determine who is a philosopher and who is not. In fact, basing on the understanding that philosophy is a way of life, it follows that everyone has a philosophy as long as s/he has a way of life. On the other hand, the definition of philosophy has become very narrow (Craig 2002). Makumba (2007) argues that if one were to look closely at the generally acceptable definitions of philosophy, even the purely etymological one as *love of wisdom*, it is very clear that philosophy is an all-inclusive enterprise, hence it is not cultural or time bound. Philosophy rather targets and points to the human person as a rational entity with faculties of reason. As a universal experience, it is not limited to a particular race or group of people. What may be called into question is the level of systematised thoughts, which certainly cannot be the same everywhere.

The two senses of philosophy

Common/Popular Sense

In an attempt to clarify and simplify what philosophy is Akinpelu (1981) identified two senses in which the term can be used namely, the common and technical senses. Commonly, philosophy is taken to refer to one’s attitude to life, which is as a result of one’s assumptions, beliefs, attitudes and prejudices to things. In this sense, everyone has his/her own likes, dislikes, prejudices as a result of one’s own experiences,

upbringing, and background. In line with this understanding, it can be noted that everyone has his/her own philosophy of life, which guides and directs how he/she conducts himself/herself (see Jaemas 1960). Such an understanding could lead to questions like: “what is the philosophy of your school? or what could be the philosophy of his actions?”

Professional/Technical Sense

In its technical sense, Akinpelu (1981) sees philosophy as an academic discipline in which scholars devote their time and energy. As such, for him philosophy is characterised by logical, consistent, and systematic thinking, so as to reach conclusions that are sound, coherent and consistent in all their parts. According to Akinpelu, to philosophise is to engage in a strenuous activity of thought and to pursue it with no other aim than to satisfy the questioning of human mind (ibid). Under this technical sense, philosophy is conceived as *action*; as *content* and as *attitude*. As activity, it involves analysing, speculating, synthesising, prescribing or even criticising issues assumptions. As content it involves those issues that make up a course of study and as attitude it refers to the distinctive attributes or dispositions, which are often required in doing philosophy (Ibid). These attitudes include logical consistency, critical thinking, tentativeness and comprehensiveness.

It is of paramount importance to note that philosophy in the technical sense, critically examines issues and problems from impartial point of view, thereby exposing biases or prejudices, whether political, economic, social or cultural (Ibid). In this sense, personal philosophy falls short of the idea of philosophy because it only embodies some rudimentary aspects of it. In other words, personal view of philosophy does not provide a thorough, rigorous, and hard look at issues, with a view to analysing them and offering a deep reflection to produce an alternative system, as does philosophy in the technical sense.

Why studying philosophy?

By and large, there are quite a number of benefits associated with the study of philosophy. To begin with, philosophy students or generally philosophers tend to have exceptional aptitude for analytical thinking, critical thinking, careful reasoning, problem solving, and communication skills valued in the legal and medical business among a host of other professions. Specifically, training in philosophy may increase one's ability to use logic, make nuanced distinctions and reasoning, recognise subtle similarities and differences, detect unstated assumptions, and decrease the likelihood of being prone to superficiality and dogmatism (Barnett 2008). This is one reason, among others, why professional disciplines such as law and jurisprudence study some philosophy courses. In fact, they borrow extensively from such branches of philosophy as logic, ethics, and epistemology. In the same vein, Priest (2006) notes that philosophy is a highly constructive enterprise arguing that philosophy is responsible for creating many new ideas and systems of thought. From this it can be inferred that philosophy is instrumental in the creation of new ideas.

Adding to that, the study of philosophy enhances, in a way no other activity does, one's problem-solving capacities. Most importantly, philosophy helps one to critically analyse concepts, definitions, arguments and problems (APA 1981). Moreover, philosophy contributes to one's capacity to organise ideas and issues, to deal with questions of value, and to extract what is essential from masses of information. In simple terms, philosophy helps one to distinguish fine differences and similarities between given views and to discover common ground between opposing positions. In short, philosophy helps one to synthesise a variety of views or perspectives into a unified whole (ibid).

Apart from that, philosophy also contributes uniquely to the development of expressive and communicative powers. In fact, through its branches like philosophy of language, logic,

philosophy of history, and philosophy of law, philosophy provides some of the basic tools of self-expression, for instance, skills in presenting ideas through well-constructed, systematic argument that other fields either do not use, or use less extensively. This way, philosophy helps one to express what is distinctive of one's view; enhances one's ability to explain difficult material; and helps one to eliminate ambiguities and vagueness from one's writing and speech (ibid).

Last but not least, philosophy provides training in the construction of clear formulations, good arguments, and apt examples. It thereby helps one develop the ability to be convincing. Through studying philosophy, one learns to build and defend one's own views, to appreciate competing positions, and to indicate forcefully why one considers one's own views preferable to alternatives (ibid).

Fields of philosophy

Normally philosophy is usually divided into a number of fields. Ultimately, these are all interwoven, and it is difficult to pursue a question in any one field without soon finding yourself in the others, too (Solomon and Higgins 2010). Thus, philosophy as a discipline is more of an activity rather than a body of passive knowledge. In other words, people learn philosophy by doing it, that is, by philosophising, hence philosophy is considered as an activity. Three types of philosophy can be identified namely; speculative, prescriptive and the analytic (Akinpelu 1981).

Speculative philosophy

To begin with, speculative philosophy as the word rightly suggests contemplates, ponders, reflects critically or speculates about and upon all things. This type of speculation is limitless as it deals with the real as well as the abstract. Notably, speculative philosophy is interested in the search for order,

wholeness and linkages in the realm of experience (Akinpelu 1981). For instance, the Millesian philosophers wanted to discover the laws that governed the universe. They also searched for explanations of life and creation. What method did they use? They made use of pure reasoning with which they speculated or reflected critically as they searched for explanations. This was a typical example of speculation. They wanted to understand the mystery of creation through speculation. This type of philosophy can be sub-divided into Metaphysics and Epistemology (Bamisaie 1989; Akinpelu 1981). The meaning of metaphysics and epistemologies will be expounded in the ensuing sections.

Prescriptive philosophy

According to Kneller (1964), prescriptive philosophy seeks to set standards, grounds or criteria for the judgment of values, conduct and art. It seeks to establish the objectivity or subjectivity of concepts such as good and bad, right, and wrong, beautiful and ugly, among many others. In other words, do these qualities adhere in things or are they mere projections of the individual mind? Prescriptive philosophy also seeks to establish some fundamental laws for judging which actions are worthwhile and which are not (Bamisaie 1989; Akinpelu 1981). What this entails is that prescriptive philosophy is judgemental.

Analytic philosophy

Analytic philosophy is concerned with the meaning of words. It analyses the meaning of words such as education, teaching, learning, intelligence, indoctrination, freedom, authority, curriculum, among many others. It endeavours to show where appropriate and how inconsistencies may come into logical presentation through the use of certain words (Hans-Johann Glock 2008; Dagfinn 1996; Danto 1980). Branches of philosophy such as philosophy of language fall within the armpit of analytical philosophy as they seek to

understand the use of language in terms of the meaning of words used.

Traditional branches of philosophy

Historically, philosophical concerns have been treated under the following broad categories: Metaphysics, logic, epistemology, and ethics. These could be represented diagrammatically as below:

Metaphysics	Logic
Epistemology	Ethics

In addition to the broad categories mentioned above, philosophy also deals with the systematic body of principles and assumptions underlying a particular field of experience. For example, there are philosophies of science, education, art, music, history, law, mathematics, and religion. Any subject pursued far enough reveals within itself philosophical problems (the task of philosophers). It is important to note that the main branches of philosophy are divided according to the nature of the questions asked in each area. It is therefore imperative to note that the integrity of these divisions cannot be rigidly maintained, for one area overlaps into the others. However, the major branches of philosophy are discussed in detail below.

a) Metaphysics

From an etymological point of view, that is, the root of the word, metaphysics, means “after the things of nature”. It came from two Greek words ‘*mata*’ meaning “after”, and *physika* meaning “nature” (Nyarwath 2010). Metaphysics is thus, the study of theory beyond nature which Aristotle called first philosophy. This is why metaphysics is referred to as an enquiry into the world and the world beyond (ibid). This makes metaphysics a foundation of philosophy and the pivot of

philosophical enquiries. From a technical perspective, metaphysics is that branch of philosophy, which studies the nature of reality. That is, metaphysics investigates reality as distinct from that which is illusionary. As such, it is vital to highlight that philosophers do not agree on the nature of reality (Barnett 2008).

Basic issues in metaphysics

Metaphysical problems are perennial problems, which keep on recurring. Pre-Socratic philosophers like Parmenides of Elea have discussed them; they have been studied by scholastics and even modern philosophers. Even the un-philosophical mind keeps on wondering about his creation, the creation of the physical world, the world beyond and a host of issues that keep on fascinating people (Omogbe 1999). As underlined earlier, people resort to philosophy when things are not working well for humanity. That is why philosophy is sometimes referred to as a child of failure. It is interesting to note that the great books written in philosophy were authored by those who were worried, disappointed, or fascinated by the happenings of their times. For instance, Plato's Republic disillusioned was written out of Plato's disillusionment of the politics of his time culminating into the death of his master, Socrates. Leibniz's works were as a result of his perplexity and fascination as a result of scientific discoveries of his days (Ibid).

Consequently, Plato's Republic was in search of an ideal society by teaching what constitutes justice. Omogbe identified the basic issues in metaphysics as follows: the problem of being, the problem of substance, the problem of essence and existence, the problems of universals, the problem of appearance and reality, the problem of unity and diversity, the problem of change and permanence, the problem of causality, the problem of body – mind interaction and the problem of freedom and determinism (ibid). Let me take the issues one after the other to see the issues and controversies at stake.

The problem of being

For Parmenides whatever exists is being. According to his understanding, being is one, eternal and unchanging. For Aristotle, this being is God whom he considered the pure being. St. Thomas Aquinas arguing from a Christian perspective of metaphysics maintains that God is the being par excellence. The Scholastic philosophers however made a distinction between necessary being and contingent being. A necessary being owes his existence to no other being outside himself whilst a contingent being is not responsible for its own existence, and does not contain within itself the sufficient reason for its existence. Let me hasten to highlight that philosophers are divided over this metaphysical issue of reality. Some see being as whatever exists, while others take a mystical approach and see it as a hidden, mysterious reality which is both immanent and transcendent, and which is the source of all things.

The problem of substance

This metaphysical problem has continued to attract the attention of philosophers. Aristotle distinguished between substance and accident. Substance is whatever exists on its own, while accident is whatever cannot exist on its own but only inherent in other things. According to John Locke, when we look at things what we see are actual qualities such as colour, height, size, and so on. But we know qualities cannot exist independently as they must exist in something which supports them.

The problem of essence and existence

Sartre's main contention is that existence precedes essence, as opposed to traditional Western philosophy, which gives primacy to essence over existence. Philosophers are divided over which comes first? Is it existence or essence? This is a standing controversy that remains topical even today.

The problem of universals

Philosophers in succession hold that things such as beauty, justice, goodness, whiteness, humanity etcetera are universals. They are universal concepts and not just ideas in the mind. We recognise them in things that exhibit them, and this means that they are real, though they are not physical. Socrates was the first philosopher in the West to articulate the issues of universals. He insisted on the distinction between the universals and the things that exhibit them.

The problem of appearance and reality

It is a true that appearance deceives and that our senses often deceive us. We cannot therefore always take things as they appear to us, nor can we always rely on our senses, since they sometimes deceive us. Parmenides, Plato and Rene Descartes mistrust senses as a means of acquiring knowledge. For instance, Bertrand Russell says, we assume as certain many things which on closer scrutiny are found to be so full of apparent contradictions that only a great amount of thought enables us to know what is it that we can really believe without reasonable doubt. The controversy here is whether appearance is the same thing as reality or appearance is one thing and reality is another.

Problem of unity and diversity

It is true that unity and diversity are observable in the universe. How is it that there is a basic unity in the midst of amazing diversity of things in the universe? The Ionians, the earliest philosophers in the West, were struck by the unity as well as diversity of things in the universe. These philosophers adopted a monistic explanation and held that all these are basically one though in various forms. In Western Philosophy, three approaches have been adopted, namely; the monistic, the dualistic and the pluralistic approaches so as to explain the problem of unity and diversity in metaphysics.

The problem of change and permanence

One of the earliest problems in Western philosophy is the problem of change and permanence. Which of the two elements, that is, change or permanence is primary? Heraclitus and Parmenides held extreme positions which subsequent philosophers tried to reconcile. While Heraclitus held that change was the basic feature of the universe, Parmenides held that permanence was the primary feature.

The problem of causality

Cause is that which is responsible for bringing something into existence. The statement, “everything has a cause” is taken to be of universal application. Since there is no event that has no cause, nothing ever happens without cause. Scientists tell us that the universe is an orderly cosmos, not chaotic universe where anything can happen. In other words, it is a universe governed by laws and things happen only according to these laws. This is the basic presupposition of modern science, and all that scientists do, is to understand these laws so as to know the kind of causes that can produce certain kinds of desirable effects.

Problem of mind-body interaction

The question of the nature of the human mind and its relation with the body has long been a controversial issue. Different philosophers have conceived mind differently. Plato, Augustine, Aquinas and Descartes conceive the mind as a separate substance that exists on its own without the body. Others like David Hume and Bertrand Russell have denied that the mind is a separate substance that can exist independently of the body. This problem, like other philosophical problems, still remains unsolved to the satisfaction of all philosophers.

The problem of freedom and determinism

It is commonly believed that man is free; that he makes use of his freedom the way he likes and is therefore held morally

responsible for whatever he does. The theory of determinism however denies that man is really free. The future is irrevocably fixed and man can do very little to change it. Logical determinists claim that every future event is caused and so it must either occur or not occur and so what we call history is the manifestation of divine will. Albert Einstein, the greatest scientist of the last millennium, argued along these lines. In presenting the position of freewill, Enoh (2001) argued that it does present a direct opposition to determinism. According to him, the position recognises that man lives in a world that is orderly and stable and therefore having laws, which control the flow of things. Man cannot therefore be an exception and this subjects him to these forces. To this aspect, his actions are to some degree determined. He then concludes that what gives man dignity as a human being is his capacity to transcend the bonds of such determinism and choose certain cause of action.

From the foregoing discussions on metaphysics, it can be seen that man is a metaphysical being. In other words, metaphysics is part and parcel of man. Man is always fascinated by his creation on earth, the universe, the existence of God and all he sees around. Although some philosophers see metaphysics as meaningless, it appears real in human life. Metaphysically people have seen that man's imaginative and explorative activities in search of knowledge and wisdom go beyond sense perception.

(b) Epistemology

The word epistemology is a derivation from two Greek words, *episteme*, meaning knowledge, and *logos*, meaning study (Nyarwath 2010). Literally, therefore, it means the study of knowledge. More commonly, however, it is known as the theory of knowledge by which we mean the branch of philosophy which is concerned with posing, reflecting and examining questions related to knowledge or knowing. In general, epistemology is the branch of philosophy concerned primarily with the nature, sources, limits and criteria knowledge

(Barnett 2008). Some of the questions addressed are as follows; what is the human mind capable of knowing? From what sources do we gain our knowledge? Do we have any genuine knowledge on which we can depend, or must we be satisfied with opinions and guesses? Are we limited to knowing the bare facts of sense experience, or are we able to go beyond what the senses reveal?

There are three central questions in this field:

- What are the *sources* of knowledge? Where does genuine knowledge come from or how do we know? This is the question of origins.
- What is the *nature* of knowledge? Is there a real world outside the mind, and if so can we know it? This is the question of appearance versus reality.
- Is our knowledge *valid*? How do we distinguish truth from error? This is the question of the tests of truth, of verification.

Traditionally, most of those who have offered answers to these questions can be placed in one of two schools of thought—rationalism or empiricism. The rationalists hold that human reason alone can discover the basic principles of the universe. The empiricists claim that all knowledge is ultimately derived from *sense experience* and, thus, that our knowledge is limited to what can be experienced. It should be clear that there is a necessary relation between metaphysics and epistemology. Our conception of reality depends on our understanding of what can be known. Conversely, our theory of knowledge depends on our understanding of ourselves in relation to the whole of reality.

Sources of epistemic knowledge

Types of knowledge vary with their sources, their methods of acquisition and validation.

Empirical knowledge

This is the type of knowledge people obtain through observation of the things around them, through their senses and through personal experiences from actions in which people are involved. It is the characteristic of knowledge in the science, both natural and social (Ayer 1995). Knowledge acquired through seeing objects, hearing sounds, tasting flavour, feeling something or smelling odour is empirical knowledge (ibid). In short, our endowed senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and feeling are the gateways to scientific knowledge. This is a very important type of knowledge and it is very much valued in today's world of science and technology. But do senses alone furnish us with knowledge, as scientists would hold? It must be noted that the senses alone without the co-operation of reason cannot furnish us with knowledge. Until reason interprets them and gives them meaning, they are simply raw data without meaning. For example, the direct object of the sense of sight is simply colour, when we look, we can only see colour. That is, all the sense of sight can furnish us with. It is reason, which tells us that what we are seeing is a tree, a table, a blackboard, an animal, a human being etc. (ibid).

Furthermore, the direct object of the sense of hearing is sound. The ears do not tell us where the sound comes from. We hear the sound of an aeroplane passing, the sound of gunshot, or that of a thunder. It is our reason that tells us, for example, that the sound we are hearing is that of thunder not that of aeroplane or gunshot. Our ears only register the sound without telling us the meaning of the sound. The same applies to all other senses. When I perceive an odour, for example, it is my reason that interprets the odour I am perceiving and tells me that it is the odour of a decaying animal or cosmetics (ibid). When a blind man touches something, the sense of touch does not tell him what he is touching. It is reason that interprets his experience and tells him what he is touching. All these imply

that the senses alone without reason cannot furnish us with knowledge (Ibid).

Rational knowledge

This is the knowledge derived by reasoning that is not by observation, but by inferring new knowledge from what we already know. Mathematics is a good example of rational knowledge, so also are subjects such as philosophy and logic. Given some hypothesis or premise, we can go ahead to deduce a number of conclusions that must necessarily follow (Ayer 1995). For example, given the premise that a man is a bachelor, it follows as of necessity that he is not married. Or the fact that there is a teacher implies that there must be a learner. From the presence of the teacher, we logically infer or deduce that there must be a learner or some learners whom he teaches (ibid). The hallmark of this type of knowledge is that the conclusions being inferred must logically and necessarily follow from what went before. It is a law of reasoning and argumentation, which applies to most school subjects. Hence, in mathematics, for example, the teacher should not just mark the answer to a mathematical question correct or wrong, rather he/she should award credit to the logical steps by which the student reaches the answer (ibid). This is also the practice in philosophy; it is not so much in the final conclusion that matters as the reasoning process in arriving at the conclusion.

Revealed knowledge

This is the characteristic of religions, especially the revealed ones. The religions which most of us are familiar with are Christianity and Islam, through the Bible and Quran. This type of knowledge was revealed to the prophets of these religions who faithfully recorded the knowledge for mankind and imparted the contents to their followers (Ayer 1995). The method of the original acquisition was by vision or trance, possible only to those who are holy enough or those to whom God or Allah had chosen to reveal Himself (ibid). This type of

knowledge is not open to observation, or empirical tests, nor can be proven by logic and human reasoning. It just has to be accepted by faith. This type of knowledge is considered as the final word of God Almighty, which cannot be subjected to empirical tests or rational analyses (ibid).

Intuitive or Insight knowledge

It is knowledge that is acquired directly by an immediate contact of the mind with the object without going through the process of reasoning. It comes as a flash into the mind. It can come in form of inventive intuition when in a flash; a certain bright idea comes to our mind as a kind of vision. Archimedes was reported to have had a vision of the law of floatation in a flash while taking his bath. He was so overwhelmed by the vision that he rushed naked to record such a very important insightful knowledge before it escaped his memory. Musicians and artists do enjoy such intuition occasionally, and the result is beautiful piece of artwork or music.

Conditions of knowledge

In an attempt to answer these questions with regards to what constitute knowledge, A.J. Ayer (1955) gave three conditions of knowledge as follows:

- What one said to know be true;
- That one should be sure of it (ability to justify), and
- That one should have the right to be sure.

The words that stand distinct in Ayer's conditions of knowledge are: certainty, and justification for knowledge. Knowing is being in the appropriate position to certify or give one's authority or warrant to the truth of what is said to be known. The man who has a true opinion is the man who has the right to be sure. I know, therefore, is related to I guarantee (ibid).

Similarly, Austin (1961) argues: If you say you know something, the most immediate challenges take the form of

asking: Are you in a position to know? That is you must undertake to show not merely you are sure of it, but that it is within your cognisance. What is the implication of this? The implication of this is that a person who knows has cause to be sure, certain, and to guarantee what is known. To know is stronger than to believe or hold an opinion. This is because knowledge enlarges and enriches one's ideas, choices, alternatives and initiatives to make an action deliberately. Roderich Chisholm (1963) on the other hand says that a person can be said to know something if he believes it, if he is justified in believing it, in the sense that his believing it is reasonable or acceptable.

From the foregoing, it is clear that belief is not the same as knowledge because knowledge must be based on conclusive evidence and it must be certain. Belief, in contrast, is not based on conclusive evidence. For instance, if I hear over the radio that someone is dead, I cannot say that I know that the person has died. I can only say that I want to believe that he is dead, since I heard that over the radio, since my evidence is the news broadcast from the radio. This is not conclusive evidence. Knowledge, however, entails belief in the sense that a person cannot say that he knows something but that he does not believe it. I know it but I don't believe it, is an incongruous statement for anybody to make. It makes sense however, to say I do not know it but I believe it.

It is vital to note that belief can pass into knowledge. What was formerly an object of belief can become an object of knowledge (Ayer 1995). This happens when what was formerly believed becomes justified. There were many beliefs, which became either justified true knowledge or refuted as false through ample evidence. For instance, before Copernicus, the earth, it was believed, was the centre of the solar system and all other heavenly bodies revolved around it. Copernicus' work refuted the belief with the discovery of the sun as the centre of the solar system and which all other planets revolved around. Today, it is a justified true knowledge (ibid).

Criteria for knowledge

Bamisaie (1989) in her contribution to what constitutes knowledge enumerated five criteria for knowledge: viz: existence, certainty, validity, veracity and utility. What does each of these terms convey in relation to knowledge? Firstly, existence means that knowledge should have existential reference. In other words, what should constitute knowledge should be that which exists. The geography teacher, for instance, teaching the relief features of Africa should make reference to such features that exist. If he makes reference to Kilimanjaro Mountain, it is with the understanding that Mount Kilimanjaro exists somewhere in Africa. What does not exist should not constitute knowledge (ibid). Secondly, certainty means that knowledge should be validly proved. Thirdly, validity means that knowledge should not be self-contradictory. In fact, veracity means that knowledge expresses truth. As a result, falsehood does not constitute knowledge. It is the truth inherent in knowledge that makes it reliable and certain. Last but not least, utility means that knowledge is either useful in its direct benefit to the knower or in its potential for creating further knowledge (ibid).

(c) Axiology

Axiology is the study of values. It is the branch of philosophy that is concerned with various criteria, which underline the choices we make (and do not make), or with the factors, which affect our desires, interest, needs, likes, performances (Enoh 2001). Axiology is divided into two components; ethics and aesthetic. Ethics is a branch of philosophy that is concerned with human actions and behaviour in the society. Ethics can be understood etymologically as derived from the Greek word *ethos* meaning character/ personal character (Nyarwath 2010). It is, therefore, an investigation into the nature of a virtuous life or the right way to live. Ethics is concerned with understanding/evaluating

the character of individuals. It studies moral values and standards by which we ought to live (Ibid). Wojtyla and Aguas (2013) note that ethics study the norms or standards or codes that would define or determine the morality of human act or conduct. It is therefore apparent that ethics is all about human relationships. In broad terms, ethics concerns itself with the question of morality. Morality is derived from the Latin word *moralis* which means customs or manners. Commonly people speak of people being ethical or moral to mean good or right and immoral to mean wrong or bad (Bloom 2010). This shows that morality is something that enables people to distinguish right from wrong and it also serves as a guide to people's actions. Philosophers are divided on whether morality is a function of reason or a function of passions. While some hold that morality is a function of reason, others maintain that morality is a function of passions. Omoregbe (1993), for instance, contends that morality is the integrated function of both reason and the passions. He argues that both rationality and passions are essential ingredients of morality. Man is the only being that combines rationality and passions; hence, morality is uniquely human. Man is therefore a harmonious blend of passions and reason.

On the other hand, aesthetic deals with the norm of beauty. In other words, this branch of axiology is concerned with appreciating beauty in nature and art. It attempts to evaluate the various criteria of beauty that is a justification we make for preferring a certain work of art to another (Enoh 2001). It is in the very nature of man to appreciate beauty in the work of art, in man, music etc. It is in the light of satisfying man's quest for beauty that the display of works of art are organised at local, national and even at international levels to satisfy and appreciate beauty (Ibid).

What philosophy is not

Unfortunately, in addition to saying what philosophy is, it is also necessary to say what it is not or opposite of what philosophy is. Philosophy is neither cultural criticism nor political activism. We neither deny that culture as politics or any other realm of life prompts philosophical questions nor that philosopher(s) may, or even should, play an active public role. But to the extent that different realm of life should, they just satisfy a broader obligation, applying to publicly funded intellectuals more generally. Philosophy is not cognitive science either. The study of the brain, like the one of language by linguistics, is an important area of scientific research to which philosophy can contribute. But this should not motivate us to cannibalise ourselves by allocating resources that are in short supply elsewhere to research which is not primarily philosophical. While both interaction with the sciences and with the more general culture are important and can provide useful inputs for philosophy itself, philosophers should concentrate on the core of their discipline, i.e. the most central, general, and therefore, difficult questions of metaphysics, epistemology, logic, aesthetics, and ethics. In particular, they should focus on their problems, rather than on themselves (Keller 2006). Philosophy is not a contribution to human knowledge, but to human understanding. It seeks to advance understanding and not to produce new knowledge. Nevertheless, it is this understanding that provokes people to produce new knowledge.

More so, philosophy is neither an empirical science nor an a priori one, since it is no science qua science. What philosophy does, however, is to question the empirical science and a priori ones.

Conclusion

The chapter has shown that ‘philosophy’ finds its place of origin in the language of ancient Greece. The word philosophy is thus translated to mean ‘love of wisdom.’ There has not been large collective convergence to the question what philosophy is? The term is hard to pin down precisely. What philosophy is has always been – and hopefully always will be – a much debated question. Some expect from philosophy profound answers to life’s deepest questions, while others simply ignore it as meaningless drivel. We can reverently approach it as the most important of human endeavours, or dismisses it as idle speculation about the most problematic of concerns. Many consider it to be a subject that, since it concerns everyone, must be a simple matter and thus comprehensible to all, whereas others consider philosophy so difficult that it is pointless even to attempt to understand it. And indeed, what has often been presented in the past as philosophy provides ample evidence to warrant such contradictory ideas about its nature.

