

# Philosophy: 'What Is It All About?'

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## Abstract

*The number of students enrolling for philosophy courses in our public universities is dwindling. Philosophy, the mother of all intellectual learning, is on the verge of being erased from Kenyan universities' curricula. From discussions with students over a whole decade it has become evident to me that one of the reasons why students fear philosophy is the impression that its main content and purpose is simply the acquisition of prowess in criticality and in the use of modern symbolic or mathematical logic, with the underlying hermeneutics of suspicion, scepticism and intellectual paranoia often associated with philosophical debates. This paper, by tracing the main highlights of the history of philosophy, is intended to avert those fears by underscoring the fact that, while criticality and modern logic are useful aspects for philosophy, the field of philosophy per se is not reduced to them; it has its proper content that is open to every person committed and devoted to the pursuit of truth and its possibility regarding the world and nature, who and what the human being is—his origin, purpose, activity and end—life and death, society and human relations, good and evil. Its proper role is sapiential: the 'love of wisdom.'*

## Philosophy: 'What Is It All About?'

The etymological root of the term '*philosophia*' or "love of wisdom" is attributed to Pythagoras, the Greek. There is an ancient tradition that tells us that the early Greeks thinkers called themselves "wise men" or *sophos* and that Pythagoras, a rather modest man, out of self effacement preferred to be called simply the 'lover of wisdom'. From there gradually the term 'philosophy' came to be used in place of that of 'wisdom': Artigas (1990:3). Most mainstream philosophers agree that '*philosophia*' or 'love of wisdom' is a most adequate descriptor of the inquiry in which wisdom is the *telos* or end, that is to say, for its own sake and not for any other motive than the thing sought.

While the word Philosophy is undoubtedly Greek in origin what about the discipline which calls itself philosophy; is it Greek too? This question was posed by Bina Gupta (1996), an Indian philosopher, who quickly added that by 'Greek' here the reader should understand 'Western'. Gupta had been incensed by a remark attributed to Edmund Husserl that questioned the logic of talking about 'Western Philosophy' because for him the mention of non-Western Philosophy as an idea seemed to be a contradiction in terms. This rather narrow and seemingly arrogant understanding of our discipline by such a renowned philosopher as Husserl makes one wonder what those ancient Greeks would have said of philosophy had they lived today. A simple puzzle but then isn't that where philosophy starts?

### 1. Philosophy as 'love of wisdom'

The Greek thinkers are credited for having identified and popularised the activity they called 'love of wisdom' as a set of reflections or exercises of the mind in the search of a profound knowledge about reality; knowledge that goes beyond the ordinary spontaneous kind, knowledge attained through popular belief, the arts or particular technical know how. In his dialogue, the *Symposium* (204 b-c), Plato points out that philosophy is neither ignorance nor wisdom. It is neither a passing concern for the meaning of things nor a cynic attitude to them like of the person who presumes to know everything. Rather, philosophy is something born suddenly as man starts to wonder 'amazed' or 'surprised' by either an experience he has just gone through or simply by a deeper consideration of the things that are all around him, and he simply tries to unravel the truth underlying what he sees or what he experiences. Hence, the day when man first started to reflect on those things, that was the beginning of philosophy.

Philosophy is a 'thinking consideration' of things, a rational attempt to answer ultimate questions regarding reality, and the ultimate reason or causes of things. Often this consideration or wonder is prompted by human experiences such as life and death, the world, who and what

man is: his origin, purpose and end; good and evil; knowledge, truth and its possibility; society and human relations. To philosophize is nothing other than to reflect on the totality of the things we encounter in view of their ultimate reason and ultimate causes.

Philosophers have sometimes been scoffed at as people that are incapable of controlling their craving for knowledge (Pieper 1992:17). As an accusation this description does more credit to philosophy than an insult, in the sense that all philosophizing starts in a longing for truth. A characteristic of philosophy is that it is something that flows from one's basic existential disposition; a spontaneous, urgent and an inescapable stirring of a person's innermost life. A true philosopher is never satisfied; never has enough. For that reason Plato compared the philosopher to a 'lover', a person simply 'beside him or herself', moved to the core and lost in his wonderment of his world. "Wonder is the feeling of the philosopher and philosophy begins in wonder": Thaletus, (155d). According to Pieper (1992:12) Alan N. Whitehead once described philosophy as consisting of the simple question: "What is it all about?" meaning that philosophy is a rational quest that seeks the truth in any and all areas of reality. Good examples of what I am trying to say were the Ionians of the Mediterranean Greek coast during the 5<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. There we find a number of curious fellows completely dissatisfied with traditional explanation of what everything is and where it came from. Their curiosity has left them a place in the history of the world as the earliest recorded 'lovers of wisdom' because they displayed a remarkable enthusiasm for investigation across a broad spectrum. Another example is Aristotle himself who going beyond the interests of the Ionians was frantically interested in everything: from meteors to eclipses, from fishes to whirlwinds, from man to politics, from religion to human happiness and morality.

Although the Greeks offer the best recorded history of such activity in ancient times, there is no proof that they ever considered 'love of wisdom' to be a prerogative of the West. It would appear that among them philosophy was an attitude, an activity of men (or women) engaged in the search of wisdom, more than an objective discipline to be taught or learned. In Plato's and Aristotelian terms philosophy is not something you first learn from a book the way you learn a language or mathematics or geography, and later do something with it. Rather it is an inquiry of the highest order, regarding why anything is the way it is. The so called disciplines were the sciences; or the organized content of sciences such as mathematics or physics (Sanguinetti 2002:71). Aristotle, for example, distinguished empirical studies like Biology or Mineralogy as disciplines which require a low level of inquiry. Hence, they deserved the name of 'sciences' because they pointed rather to the 'how' and not to the 'why' of things. They were therefore particular sciences, limited to the search of the proximate causes of what appears. However, he underscored their importance for philosophy cautioning that although the particular sciences carried out the preliminary research and recorded the facts, that contribution simply supported the metaphysical work by making it possible to ascertain "something is" there; that "there is", that is to say, that 'something is'. Descriptive or phenomenological disciplines on the other hand were not even considered to be science; they remained just a step away from science or *episteme*.

An essentially characteristic feature of philosophy in the classic tradition of the discipline was its free character. Philosophy was a truly free intellectual endeavour, free in the sense that it was not geared toward some purpose outside itself. It was (and continues to be) an Endeavour containing its own meaning and which requires no justification from a purpose to be 'served' (Pieper 1992:43). It would have been an astonishing thing to think that at any period of its history philosophy would need to justify its existence in the realm of learning.

In the course of history the manner of doing philosophy has undergone various changes. Among the reasons for those changes is the fact that the distinction among the disciplines as we know them today was not made until the modern times. Today, the majority of those engaged in philosophy first heard about it in school or college as a field already developed in its own

right. We no longer get into philosophy as a consequence of hearing beautiful dialogues in an Academy like that of Plato, or in a porch or garden, nor promenading with Aristotle, both of them practices which are more in line with African informal educational system. As to the claim that it is an inquiry of the highest order, few people even among the philosopher will accept that the human sciences are low level inquiry disciplines that serve philosophy, even if that is still true. More still, when we look at its history, which is long and complicated, we are amazed to find that two traditions of philosophy have always lived side by side: one geared more towards philosophy as a free pursuit of truth, and another, which has always seen the realization of that pursuit as impossibility (McInerney 2002).

## 2. 'Metaphysics': Wisdom of the highest natural order

The task of deepening our understanding of our most basic knowledge, that which we use in all sciences and in individual and social activity, as well as in defending this basic knowledge against those who, without reason deny it its value, is what Aristotle called First Philosophy or Metaphysics. The works of Aristotle which versed on matters beyond the physical, and in which he defines his wonder and concern for reality just as reality or 'being as being' (Metaphysics Book IV 1003a25-30) were given the name *Meta ta physica* by Andronicus of Rhodes around the year 70 AD, a term which experts find to be a most appropriate description of their content. Metaphysics is 'wisdom' in the natural order because only discipline that verses on the kind of wisdom whose pillars stem from the first principles of human knowledge. That characteristic alone makes it so basic that it can not be substituted by any other science. Its principles are the 'first principles' which other disciplines need to define themselves and to develop ideas regarding their particular objects: for example, the principle of Identity or of Non-contradiction.

In the opening chapters of his Metaphysics, Aristotle presents us with a generalization that says: "all men by nature desire to know" (Metaphysics A I 980a20-25). Thereafter he traces this generalization through sense perception, the internal senses: imagination, experience, to *techné* (technique), to particular science or *epistémé*, and all the way to the knowledge of the 'why' or cause. He goes on to show that *techné* gives way to *epistémé* both of which are accomplished through knowledge of causes. One who has knowledge of causes is considered wiser than one who does not. For that reason the wise man is distinguished by the fact that he can teach what he knows by explaining why. 'Wisdom' is knowledge of principles and causes. The question is: "since we are seeking this knowledge, we must inquire of what kind are the causes and the principles, the knowledge of which is Wisdom" (Metaphysics A 2. 982a5—10). That is to say, what kind of causes does wisdom know? To answer that question Aristotle meticulously develops the idea of wisdom. In summary, what he says is that wisdom, "the science which it would be most meet for God to have (it is) a divine science, and so is any science that deals with divine objects, (...) this science alone has both these qualities, for God is thought to be among the causes of all things and to be the first principle.... Wisdom in its highest grade is divine" (Book 1 A I 983a6-10). Aristotle further explains that as for the purpose of such wisdom, "it is not a science of production even from the history of the earliest philosophers. For it is owing to their wonder that men at first began to philosophize; they wondered originally at the oblivious difficulties, then advanced little by little and stated difficulties about the greater matters (...). Since they philosophize in order to escape from ignorance, evidently they were pursuing science in order to know, and not for any utilitarian end" (Book 2, 982b10-20).

That is what Aristotle and his contemporaries called First Philosophy and the principle pursuit of the philosopher. But not everyone saw wisdom to consist solely in this kind of wisdom. We also know that ancient philosophers, specifically the branch that went down in history with the name of sophists did not uphold this view. In the last centuries before the Christian era, especially though not exclusively, we find philosophers who seek to provide practical guidance on how to fare and succeed in life calling themselves philosophers. The names they gave to

their schools: stoic, epicurean, cynic and sceptic are indicative of the manner of thinking and behaving that they adopted. In the earlier period however, the strongest representation of suspended truth were the sophists. The practical consequence of sophism was scepticism regarding any truth, and in the moral sphere relativism. No wonder then that we find Aristotle lamenting that there were some people who, denying the basic-ness of the first metaphysical principles, would have us believe that a thing is and is not at the same time (Book IV Ch.4 1005 b 35-1006 a 1.). Aristotle specifically mentions Protagoras' denial of objective truth when he teaches that "Man is the measure of all things – things which exist, in so far as they exist, and things which do not exist insofar as they do not exist" (Protagoras 1976:197) and upholding a principle of contraries.

At this stage we should of course ask: is there any such thing as truth anyway? Before answering that question, we should pose another one: if it is the case that there is no objective truth, no reality as far as man is concerned, it ought to follow that even this statement itself is not objective, not necessarily true. But for the 'sophists' of gone by days and of our day too, this does not seem to have posed a major problem because the only kind of truth they cared for was 'pragmatic', or the ability to produce the desired effects rather than the pursuit of 'what is' and 'why it is', the real love of wisdom. In Protagoras, for example, we read how, feeling compelled to show the relevance of his work, he proclaimed that his domain was the pursuit of wisdom and that wisdom consisted in "teaching others how to deal successfully with the world" (Protagoras 1976: 198). This consideration drives us to reflect: in requiring philosophy to justify its existence in the institutions of learning, haven't we turned sophist?

If the sophists were the first pragmatists, the root of their problem was basically metaphysical with epistemological outcomes. The sophists "could not accept the notion of truth as the conformity of judgment and reality" (McInerney 2002:678). For them truth was not so much a question of a match between a judgment and the things that 'are', no, what mattered more is what caused the desired effect. A statement of truth was judged in terms of its bringing about a desired effect; in terms of whether it works and what it produces. If it works its good; if it does not work it is bad.

Throughout the history of Western philosophy the sapiential character of philosophy has been a subject of controversy. The results are that the discipline has suffered setbacks which have transformed it from what it once firmly stood for, even unto death (remember Socrates), to an 'utilitarian' discipline in the manner of the sophists of old. The bone of contention has nearly always been the acceptance or denial of the existence of some 'first metaphysical principles'. These have either been deformed or denied validity (causality, essences, existence of the external world, the value of moral norms, etc), and once efforts for deepening into their significance were abandoned metaphysics naturally came to mean little and even to be scoffed at.

In modernity the beginning of that transformation was "to announce that all previous philosophy was meaningless or based on some mistake which could be corrected (MacInerney 2002:679). The new era is marked by Rene Descartes' declaration that 'the place of the old theoretical philosophy should be taken by a new practical philosophy which would allow men to become the masters and owners of nature' (In Pieper, 1966 30-31). Throughout the Enlightenment period that declaration was systematized and perfected in different ways and in different philosophical systems: rationalism, empiricism, positivism... Later, it was believed, especially in Anglo-American circles that a criterion for meaningfulness had at last been found. That criterion rendered metaphysics as well as any ethic grounded on metaphysics meaningless too.

Today, as the world becomes more consumerist, what we are experiencing is a demand that scholars especially those who deal with abstract problems (that is to say philosophy) not forget

that the scope of all science (knowledge) consist in satisfying the needs of society. We read of scholars too who believe that "all the achievements of human knowledge are like tools in the great endeavour of intellectual industry and for that reason the purpose of all mental exertion should be to guard life and the enjoyment of life". Hence, "philosophy should set out not to understand the world but to dominate it" Pieper (1966:31). This requirement constitutes a major debate among philosophers regarding how one should understand philosophy. Is the description of philosophy as 'love of wisdom' still valid? Is it still a pursuit of wisdom? Some philosophers, feeling uneasy about the abstract character of this pursuit have attempted to eliminate the incommensurability between philosophy, as a purely theoretical endeavour, and empirical science which has certainly been so successful in improving peoples' lives styles. The consequence, as Pieper so adroitly points out, have always been that philosophy fails to make the mark within those terms Pieper (1192:43). It fails not because it is inferior to the empirical disciplines but rather because the terms of reference are faulty. Just as one does not have a practical use for poetry or literature or even history, when he is hungry or when he needs shelter, similarly philosophy is done for reasons other than *uti* or use.

In the past century those who dared to take the challenged tried to find a way of making philosophy to be as 'scientific' as possible with the argument that in philosophy just like in the sciences, there have to be some laws, some discipline regarding what can be philosophized about, and certain preliminaries which should be learnt. Consequently, to talk about such concepts as 'being', 'reality', 'substance', 'essence' was considered to be talking about 'things beyond our understanding' and hence a lack of discipline. All such "metaphysical" notions in the minds of these current/of philosophers, should be rejected from the realm of knowledge for the simple reason that they can not be observed, touched or smelt, heard, and hence, they do not qualify to give us objective truth<sup>1</sup>.

At once one cannot fail to recognize the claim of the early Vienna Circle's manifesto which they called the "Scientific World View". This manifesto claimed, among other things, that what 'is', is on the surface. That is to say, everything that is 'real' is accessible to human perception. Consequently, it would be nonsensical to search for a 'root' of all things or to speak of 'ultimate reasons and causes'. It was to this school that A. N. Whitehead, one of the founders of modern mathematical logic belonged. It was also this current of philosophy which called for a more methodical or 'scientific philosophy'. It then went forward to establish the method and following that method ended up denouncing all claims to knowledge of reality as illusory. The centrality previously accorded to Metaphysics was now to be increasingly occupied by logic and 'critical thinking'. 'Criticality' became the most crucial aspect of the discipline. This 'criticality', as a description of philosophy, is one which points to the rational, methodical, and systematic consideration of our experiences, or the ability to 'critically examine the rational grounds of our most fundamental beliefs, and the logical analysis of the basic concepts employed in the expression of such beliefs'. But was this to be the end of philosophy?

### 3. The 'end' of philosophy

The term 'end' can be used in two senses which in fact end up being one and the same: 'end' can be understood as the purpose for which something is done. But 'end' also means the finishing line when there is nothing beyond. For example when someone completes reading a book, completes a journey that she had started, or completes studying for a career, she may be said to have come to the end. In both cases, we can talk of 'end' as having arrived where one wanted to reach, or was meant to reach: the end of a book, the end of a road, the end of a career, or as having attained the purpose for which a certain action was being carried out.. So in speaking about the 'end' of philosophy here, I wish to retain both meanings because they are related.

<sup>1</sup> An earlier protagonist of this line of thought was of course David Hume in his *Essay Concerning Human Nature* published in 1748.

What at some stage may have been considered 'end', meaning purpose, at another stage ends up being 'end', but 'end' which is understood to be a means to some other purpose. Regarding the end of philosophy, Aristotle has left us a wonderful series of acute discussions in which he defends the purpose of human existence to be both to know and to attain happiness, at least to some extent. To know is to know the truth. Knowledge of truth satisfies, makes one happy. In his exposition on knowledge, Aristotle is nevertheless careful to point out the kinds of internal difficulties that may arise from theories that deny the human capacity to know truth (*On the Soul Book 3 Chapters 3-7*). Such theories only lead to a dead end (*aporia*) with philosophically disastrous conclusions. The defence of the human capacity to have some objective knowledge can be traced throughout the long period of Western Classical and Mediaeval Philosophy. St. Augustine, defending the value of human knowledge proposes to the sceptics, who professed universal doubt, the simple argument that *si enim fallor, sum* (if I doubt I am). Thirteen centuries later Descartes would revisit this same argument. He presented it anew and left us his famous *cogito ergo sum*<sup>2</sup>.

Throughout his writings St. Thomas Aquinas argued that truth is one. However, he never took truth to be univocal. Throughout his psychology (*De Anima*), he maintains that there is a certain harmony and distinction between what one may know through belief (faith) and what one can get to know through the effort of human reason. The fact of belief does not, for Aquinas, disqualify something from also being an object of rational inquiry: for example God and creation. Properly speaking one could only do so by anchoring his principles on a metaphysical realism in which it is reality that measures knowledge, and not vice versa; an anthropological realism according to which the human mind attains to the truth of real things. It is a philosophy that adapts itself to reality.

Philosophical as a rational quest is precisely that kind of endeavour, an endeavour, however, in which one finds many and often differing approaches. The Aristotelian-Thomistic approach looks upon philosophy as pursuit or, better still, an attempt to answer the ultimate questions about such things as the nature of the world around us. If reality, as we observe it, is set aside that fact alone would shut out any form or possibility of truth being possible at all. That is why, at the bottom of all philosophizing we still go back to metaphysics. Truth remains the realm and end of both Metaphysics and Logic. The task of logic is that of a tool, to help organize the enquiring mind in its pursuit for the ontological truth. Logic deals with beings of reason and the relations the mind establishes among different products or contents of intellectual knowledge in such a way that the act of reasoning can be performed easily, with order, and without error. Logical systematization, therefore, serves as a means, not as an end and for that reason philosophy can not be reduced to logic as its principle discipline nor to any part of it, no matter how important.

So far we have referred to metaphysics as study of reality or of 'being as being'. The problem of what things in the world are real and which things only seem to be real and are not is an old one. The answer to that question depends mostly on what one means by "real" and what criterion one is using to determine what counts as reality. Once that criterion is established, then we can focus on the sorts of things that meet the criterion of the definition, and therefore, what things are real and true, and what things only seem to be real. Classical philosophy both Western and Eastern defines real in terms of what 'is', what is permanent or that which lies behind the appearances. The objects of our daily lives, like the table am writing on, the food I eat, the pen and paper I am using to write this paper would all fit in the definition of the real.

However in modernity this notion of reality poses a problem. A new kind of metaphysics is proposed, one in which it is thought or reason (mind) that has primacy over reality or being.

<sup>2</sup> The question is raised in various works of St. Augustine, for example, *De Civitate Dei*, Bk. XI, ch. 26, *De Libero Arbitrio*, Bk II ch. 3.

The originator of this trend was of course Rene Descartes. Rationalism simply inverts the meaning of metaphysics so that truth or knowledge of the real, in this new trend is reduced to one's consciousness (*cogito*). Truth, it is suggested, can only be known through a critical examination of one's mind, where the first step consists in a wilfully self imposed doubt, until one reaches a point where one obtains a 'clear and distinct' idea. Once this first certainty is obtained other existences are obtained too, not from experience of the extra-mental reality, but from one's consciousness by means of deduction. This is the system of philosophy I refer to as Critical Philosophy or 'criticality'.

The argument commonly given in critical philosophy is that our experience of the real is subjective and liable to change from culture to culture and from individual to individual, and even from moment to moment. This argument however does not change the fact that across cultures people speak of certain things as being real: the chair one sits on, the food or clothing one eats or wears are not considered to be appearances, and even if they were considered so, they still would be appearances of something which is what we call food or clothing or paper and pen. It would then seem to be the case that at this metaphysical level in which wisdom (*sapiential*) philosophy functions, reality is not something very problematic. At this level there is the universally accepted, deeply-rooted assumption that we live in a world of real objects, that we can experience and get to know.

The rejection of this assumption in 'critical philosophy' seems to be a problem based simply on the grounds that we do also have the experience that things change and appear differently to different people at different times and places. When not denying this latter argument, one could also pose a similar argument and say that, this experience too could be unreal since it is also taken from experience of different people at different times.... We have no verifiable proof that it stands for anything other than reality, this being what we experience under the appearances. "By reality, metaphysics articulates what the ordinary person, the non-philosopher, has in mind when he says that something is real" (Gene 1999:106-107).

For the 'critical' philosopher, on the other hand, since any attempt to know reality-in-itself is considered to be meaningless, knowledge of reality and, consequently, of truth as such, is considered to be impossible. Accordingly, the only thing one can be sure of is that he/she 'thinks', where 'to think' encompasses such concepts as 'to feel', 'to want', etc. From this 'criticality' three difficulties arise at once: first can anyone say they know anything at all, or should we assume that we know everything only generally?; secondly, if things are only known generally, in our criticality can we call that type of knowledge, knowledge at all?; thirdly, since to know is to know the truth (knowledge is only knowledge of the truth), when we say that we doubt whether one can know 'anything' at all aren't we actually saying that we cannot hope to ever know the truth about anything, even after being 'critical'?

The deepest and most systematic consequences of this approach to philosophy were of course formulated by Immanuel Kant. In his system, philosophy is essentially a critique; a critique which is also a 'theory of knowledge' where to 'critique' means to submit ones knowledge of the real to a test, on the grounds of a certain demand of thought taken as an absolute beginning. With this criticality Kant attempts to occupy the place which in classical philosophy had been the prerogative of First Philosophy or Metaphysics. He calls the method which he employs to do so 'transcendental' because its main task is to reflect upon the subjective conditions of knowledge.

Within this method it appears that since any conditions of knowledge arrived at, at any given moment must always be submitted to a further critique, and from that critique to another more radical one, it is impossible to arrive at any moment when somebody can say that they know anything at all. Isn't this scepticism? It was perhaps this observation that led Ludwig Wittgenstein to conclude that since in the whole process of 'critiques' there isn't any stage at which one could

say they really know something for sure, philosophy at bottom is nothing but a critique and analysis of language (Wittgenstein 1922), in Luño and Rodriguez (1991:33).

Friedrich Nietzsche, perhaps impressed by this new metaphysics as 'critique' went a step further to describe philosophy as a 'game' where at every stage there is less and less of what someone can hold onto, (that is to say, no objective truth), for in the final analysis of critique after critique there would be nothing left but mere emptiness; an empty man in an empty world (Pieper 1992:43). This reflection led him to despair and disillusionment that culminated in his declaration of the "Death of God"; dead because philosophy had adopted a procedure in which it had lost its feature at all.

Later philosophers taking a less radical stance do not go as far as to proclaim the death of God. Rather, they proclaim the 'death of man'. But not just any man: it is the death of the philosopher, and consequently, the end of philosophy. Their argument is that if philosophy is only 'critical analysis' of issues then its end is inevitable. They further argue that philosophy so understood can lead nowhere because the outcome of thought divorced from reality can only lead to relativism and relativism at the ethical plane translates to permissiveness and immorality. That death of philosophy is furthered when departments are put in question and asked to justify their existence in institutions of higher learning.

#### 4. Vindication of Philosophy as Wisdom: The case of African Philosophy

Certainly no one disputes the fact that any philosophy to be of some worth must be reflective. However, this reflection must include some kind of commitment. It requires that there should be not only wonder, but also some content or reality without which it can only verse on what some people call minimalist philosophy (Solomon 2001:100) (*philosophic minimality*) that is to say philosophy empty of content. Thus, to consider philosophy to be mainly a self-questioning activity clearly eliminates from its realm a good deal of non-Western thought for it ignores or removes from that realm all modes of thinking other than 'self-critical', in that way forgetting that most of the development of Western philosophy itself has its roots precisely in the relation between belief (faith) and reason.

This oversight has been pointed out by Robert Solomon, among others, where he notes that the assumption that philosophy must be as rigorously self-questioning as modern European and Anglo-American Analytical philosophy is likely to eliminate from the realm of philosophy much of African Philosophy and ethno philosophy, as well as a good deal of the philosophy of religion, the basis of the development of Western philosophy over much of the past two thousand years (2001:100).

In this view Solomon is not alone. Hallen (1977) also aptly points this tendency in Robin Horton's *Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West*. Basing his criterion of judgement on criticality, Horton asserts that Africans are less able to reflect upon and distance themselves from their theoretical or religious beliefs as possibly true or possibly false or to imagine what it might mean to envision, much less to embrace alternative beliefs, and therefore, to identify the nature of the logical and empirical criteria and testing that would need to be used to facilitate serious considerations of such alternatives.

Fortunately this view has been questioned by some African philosophers. While admitting that criticality has a significant role in philosophy they have questioned the rationale of this 'criticality' in the global philosophical quest. Referring to the arguments forwarded by Horton, Kwasi Wiredu for example, challenges the legitimacy of comparing African religion with Western science, especially in terms of their respective objectivity, and the importance attached

to criticism, verification, falsification, and the revision of theories designed to explain, predict, or control human experience. Wiredu also contends that the basis of comparison is not realistic. More realistic would be to contrast the roles and the evidential and argumentative bases for religion between the two cultures (Hallen 2002:19). Another criticism of Horton's view of 'criticality' as the only basis for true philosophy comes from Barry Hallen in *Critical Philosophy and Traditional Thought*, where, using several examples taken from the Yoruba Society of West Africa, he argues that Horton's assessment of African systems of thought as 'closed' and resistant to change or revision on the basis of critical or reflective thought to be exaggerated and untrue (Hallen 1977: 81-92). Other African philosophers have also pointed out that this requirement for wisdom to be considered philosophy not only narrows the definition of the discipline but serves to lock out a good deal of the philosophical quest contained in the wisdom of the sages (Presby 1999:89-102). The efforts of Henry Oruka are well documented in this respect. He suggests that the activity of reflection upon certain themes of fundamental importance to human life – the existence of a supreme being (or God), the nature of time, the nature of freedom, the nature of death, the nature of education – have always been of concern to a select number of people in all human societies. He contends that this kind of thinking does not presuppose a modern education or even literacy, so it is false to presume that it can only take place in societies that are typed as 'developed'. Oruka's view was that in Africa it is the task of the academically trained philosopher to identify the sages in a culture and then to record their potentially unique insights on these and related topics, unique in the sense that their beliefs may very well differ from conventional beliefs in their societies. Oruka further argues that philosophy, in the ultimate sense, is not a language analysis, nor simply the exercise enjoyed in a logical dialogue; not a special insight of the world reserved for some race or gender: philosophy is a perspective of the whole or part of the human predicament and insightful suggestion on how to get out or conform. Thus, continues the argument, "if in every community there are always persons who specialize in offering or studying such perspectives, in traditional Africa this role was left to the Sages" (Oruka 1999:35).

In support of their claim for an African Philosophy, John Kekes and Oruka used the argument that Western philosophy tradition itself has not always been too distant from the measure of the philosopher as someone who embodies wisdom. Taking the etymological origin of the word *philo sophia* they maintain that since "the word philosophy itself originally meant 'love of wisdom', a philosopher remains as the person who has intellectual concern for wisdom, and has this concern, not just occasionally, but as an integral part of life" (Kekes 1955:4) in Presby (1999:90).

Other writers point to the history of Western philosophy which attests to the fact that philosophers, both classical and contemporary often came from diverse lines of knowledge and wisdom. Some regarded Philosophy as a means of defending religion and dispelling the anti-religious errors of materialism and rationalism. Of these we have models such as St. Thomas Aquinas, George Berkeley, and later Soren Kierkegaard. Others like Pythagoras, Rene Descartes and Bertrand Russell, were primarily mathematicians whose views of reality and knowledge were influenced by mathematics. Thomas Hobbes, J.J. Rousseau and J. S. Mill were persons concerned mainly with Political Philosophy, while Socrates and Plato were occupied chiefly with the questions of ethics (olomon 2002:90). On their part the Pre-Socratics, Francis Bacon and Alan North Whitehead, start philosophizing from an interest in the physical composition of the natural world (*Concise Encyclopaedia Britannica*). All these faces of philosophy are eloquent evidence that philosophy is not limited to any one realm of knowledge or method. It remains a free quest of a mind that engages in wonder wherever and whenever men will live on this earth.

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