

THE INSTRUMENTALITY OF PHILOSOPHY TO PEACE OF MIND

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Abstract - It is the considered opinion of this paper that the ultimate aim of man knowingly or unwittingly is peace of mind. All life endeavours in terms of different occupations and the means of achieving them are all geared towards this goal though somewhat hidden or unknown to many. Arguably, life ambitions and the means of arriving at them are all pivoted on the peace of mind for their success. In this piece, the researchers are out to show how philosophy, primarily, is tailored naturally for creating peace of mind.

Index Terms- Philosophy, Instrumentality, Mind, Peace.

I. INTRODUCTION

Looking through the struggles that man undergo in life, one cannot but acquiesce to the fact that man is in earnest search. The means of this search come in different forms and methods termed occupations. Unknown to many, they mistake the means and end of this very search. That is, taking the material gains or actual arrival at the specific occupation that result in the process of this search as the goal of the search in itself. In this discourse, it is the position of the writers that the ultimate end of this search that comes in different forms and strategies known as one's life endeavour is, primarily, peace of one's mind; and that this peace of mind is equally inextricable from the means of achieving these life endeavours. That is to say, peace of mind undergirds both the means and the end. Simply put, peace of mind is that which is constantly sought after even on the road to achieving a set goal and when the goal is eventually arrived at. It is that which one at all times knowingly or unknowingly seeks. It is the ultimate end. "To be an ultimate end, an act must be self-sufficient and final, that which is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else, and it must be attainable by people [1]". For Aristotle, the ultimate end is happiness. But one may ask, can happiness be extricated from peace of mind? Arguably, the search for peace of mind betrays the idea of people switching from one activity to another, from one occupation to the other, etc. No one without peace of mind is happy, free. Peace of mind is equiperable to happiness and freedom. It is man's ultimate search in life though mistaken or unknown to many. One with it is happy and free and has more fulfilled existential living. Hence, to have found peace of mind is to have found happiness, freedom.

In discussing this topic with the philosophical method of hermeneutics, this work is divided into three sections. Section I conceptualizes the different key concepts making the discourse; section II burrows specifically on how philosophy gives peace of mind and; section III concludes the discussion with recommendations.

II. UNDERSTANDING THE KEY TERMS USED

PHILOSOPHY Among scholars, the concept philosophy defies a universally accepted single definition. “An embarrassment for professional philosophers is that they cannot produce any succinct, or even agreed, definition of their profession. ‘What is philosophy?’ is itself a philosophical question [2]”. That is to say, philosophers have their different views about the concept yet saying what the concept is. According to Mbaegbu,

In spite of all the disagreements surrounding the meaning of philosophy, most philosophers would view it at least as a form of rational activity, indeed, thinking at its most rational level, generally, about reality and what it means for man. Philosophy is a critical inquiry, for instance, on the nature of the universe and man in particular. One pursuing this type of inquiry is usually said to be a seeker of wisdom [3].

However, the only accepted definition of philosophy univocally is from its etymological perspective, “14th Century: from Greek *philosophia* love of wisdom, from *philo-* loving + *sophia* wisdom [4]”. It is important to know that philosophizing is natural with human beings. It is that common to every human being. The ability to do philosophy is intrinsic with every human being and to all cultural entities since the foundational cause of it all is curiosity or “wonder” as most great minds in philosophy would prefer to call it. It is in line with this reality that Aristotle correctly remarks that human beings by nature desire to know. Accentuating the very fact of inherent nature of philosophy to man, Hyland summarizes thus: “Philosophy is the culmination, the highest consequence of what it is to be human [5]”. Despite this common commonality of philosophy to all human beings, it is imperative to make it abundantly clear that philosophy is of first order activity and second order activity. By first order activity otherwise known as informal, ordinary or unprofessional philosophy is meant the general beliefs of a certain group of people about man, physical objects and reality in general. It is a “we”, collective beliefs of a group of people in relation to their unique environment. But second order activity understanding of philosophy equally known as formal, official, academic or professional philosophizing is a later development in man and the society as well. Mbaegbu captures this understanding well when he argues:

That the ability to philosophize is natural to man is not the same as saying that man has always philosophized in the academic meaning of the word, in the sense of a coherent, systematic inquiry (the true meaning of philosophy) since power and its use are different things altogether. Philosophy in this sense as opposed to its loose meaning of common beliefs of a people about reality, man, etc., is man’s later development, a time in society when human thought has attained a certain level and there are favourable social conditions which make man’s philosophic ability come to fruition [6].

That is to say that philosophy in its academic sense came about, “when almost all the necessities of life and the things that make for comfort and recreation had been secured [7]”. Therefore, philosophy in this second order activity is understood to mean the conscious critical individual reflection on human experiences, on physical objects, intangible beings, on man, etc., and how he understands and interprets the reality around him or her. “It is a critical, systematic, thinking, generally thought at its deepest level [8]”. Therefore, what makes an individual a philosopher, a lover of wisdom, in the sense under study, “Is not the mere fact of thinking about materials important to philosophy, such as man, culture, religion, art but thinking or reflecting on them logically, systematically, coherently, with reason as the sole guide [9]”. It is a personal and, above all, knowing thoughtful critical exercise. It is a reflexively critical activity consciously done on an individual, personal level. It is this understanding that informs the definition of philosophy by John Dewey to run thus: “criticism of criticisms [10]”. It is philosophy understood at this level that this paper refers and means in the context of this discourse.

INSTRUMENTALITY Instrument means “a thing by means of which something is done; a tool or instrument [11]”. “An important factor or agency in something [12]”. That is to say, in the context of this discourse, philosophy is seen as a means by which peace of mind is achieved.

PEACE ‘Peace’ as a concept etymologically, from 11th century emanates most newly from the Anglo-French *pes*, and the Old French *pais*, signifying "peace, reconciliation, silence, agreement". However, *Pes* on its own originates from the Latin *pax*, meaning "peace, compact, agreement, treaty of peace, tranquility, absence of hostility, harmony." “Peace” as an English word emerged into usage in different individual greetings from c.1300 as a process of changing the Hebrew word *shalom*, which, with reference to Jewish theology, emanates from a Hebrew verb purporting 'to restore'. Notwithstanding the fact that 'peace' is the normal translation, however, it is not a complete one, for *shalom*, which is equally having a common source or origin with the Arabic *salaam*, has various other significations, meanings besides peace, which includes justice, good health, safety, well-being, prosperity, equity, security, good fortune, and friendliness. On individual level, peaceful behaviours connote the ideas of kindness, considerateness, respectfulness, justness, and acceptance of others' beliefs and behaviours — inclining to show benevolence [13].

From the foregoing, the latter meaning of peace can equally relate to a person's inward looking idea or sense of her/himself, in terms of "at peace" in one's own mind, as seen in European allusions from c.1200. The beginning of the usage of the word “peace” in English is equally used in the sense of "quiet", reflecting calm, serene, and meditative methods to family or group relationships that prevent quarreling and seek tranquility, that is to say, non presence of disturbance or agitation [14]. In essence, peace can succinctly be seen as the serenity, calmness, tranquility, absence of disharmony found in an individual's own mind. In the context of this paper, the onus of the writers is to show how philosophy brings about this phenomenon in a person's mind.

MIND This is “the element of a person that enables them to be aware of the world and their experiences, to think, and to feel; the faculty of consciousness and thought [15]”. It is that aspect of an individual which enables him or her to feel, perceive, understand, reason, recollect, imagine, desire and will things. Mind is synonymous with intellect and brain. They generally “refer to that aspect of a conscious being that thinks, feels, wills, perceives, or judges [16]”. Specifically, “mind is a philosophical, psychological, and general term for the center of all mental activity, as contrasted with the body and the spirit; intellect refers to reasoning power, as distinguished from the faculties of feeling; brain is a physiological term for the organic structure that makes mental activity possible, but is often applied to mental ability or capacity [17]”.

From the foregoing explications, one can therefore say that peace of mind means the absence of disturbance, agitation or calmness, tranquility in that part of a human person that occupies the centre of mental activity. According to Remez Sasson, “Peace of mind is a state of mental and emotional calmness, with no worries, fears or stress. In this state, the mind is quiet, and you experience a sense of happiness and freedom [18]”.

Having seen what peace is, one may asks, how can peace be created, established or built? A school of thought sees peace building as a method that enhances the creation of lasting peace and attempts to avoid the reappearance of violence by focusing on fundamental causes and effects of conflict via reconciliation, institution building, and political cum economic modification. It entails a set of physical, social, and structural ideas that are almost always an inextricable aspect of post conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation [19].

For Galtung Johan, Peace building is the system of establishing self-supporting measures that eliminates agents of wars and proffer options to war in avenues where wars are most probable. That conflict resolution strategies ought to be established into the measure and be seen there as a reserve tank for the system itself to fetch from, which is similar to a healthy body that has the power to manufacture its own antibodies and does not call for emergency administration of medication [20].

It involves exercises modelled to avoid conflict by means of addressing remote and immediate bringers of violence, enhancing sustainable peace, not subscribing to violence as a conflict resolution method, creating capacity within society to amicably handle conflicts, and minimizing susceptibility to agents that may bring about violence, war.

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Peace building is a term used within the international development community to describe the processes and activities involved in resolving violent conflict and establishing a sustainable peace. It is an overarching concept that includes conflict transformation, restorative justice, trauma healing, reconciliation, development, and leadership, underlain by spirituality and religion. It is similar in meaning to conflict resolution but highlights the difficult reality that the end of a conflict does not automatically lead to peaceful, stable social or economic development. A number of national and international organizations describe their activities in conflict zones as peace building [21].

Having seen in a broad manner what it means to build peace or peace building, specifically, one may ask, how can peace of the mind be achieved? For Remez Sasson, this is achievable by treating oneself to a nice movie or interesting TV programme; being in the warmth embrace of your loved one; reading a book with rapt attention; going to the beach and lying on the sand there; going on holidays where you can separate yourself from your work and every day hustle and bustle, and as such, have some moments of mental stillness, calmness; going into deep sleep where you cannot remember what is happening around you, etc. Such exercises, and other ones like them, remove the mind away from its normal thoughts and worries, bringing instead an experience of inner peace [22].

In the opinion of Lori Deschene, one can achieve peace of mind from the following selected means. **Meditation:** sit down for a simple meditation that can take you 5-10 minutes. Walk around meditatively by paying attention solely on your physical experiences like the ground you are walking on, movement of the joints in your body like knee, shoulder, waist, etc.

Communication: make someone who offended you to understand such instead of bearing grudges, and equally, forgiving those who offended you.

Creativity: collect favourite peace quotations put it in special writing and frame them. Post on the internet writings that bring about peace of mind in you.

Activity: move into your body but out of your head by dancing to your best song paying attention mainly on the music and the shaking of your body. Rearrange your home by removing unnecessary materials in order to have a more peaceful space.

Acceptance: forgive those who wronged you in order to set yourself free. Appreciate the positive sides of you instead of wallowing on the negative ones.

Solitude: face your real self by reading that book you acquired that talk about your challenges. Immerse yourself in nature by simply sitting under a tree or on a mountain, etc., and allowing yourself to be.

Connection: sometimes do something silly and childlike but forgetting things that feel like problems to you while engaging with your loved one. Be sincere in your relationship by saying your actual feelings instead of hoarding them up.

Contribution: make someone happy by helping them achieve their set goals. Do something to another without expecting a reward [23]. The above are selected ways one can achieve peace of mind from the ensemble that the author articulated.

Having seen ways peace can be created in the minds of men and women from different authors above, one asks, how does philosophy as an academic discipline help men and women to achieve peace of mind?

III. PHILOSOPHY AS AN INSTRUMENT TOWARDS PEACE OF MIND

In the bid to have peace of mind many people have rather created more disharmony, agitation in their minds. Some people have resorted to stealing, armed robbery in the name of surviving. But instead of having peace of mind, they rather see themselves always on the run from one place to another in order to avert the wrath of law. They have their minds always anxious, tensed up as they try earnestly to find ways of escape. In the end, more disquietude is got instead of peace of mind. This phenomenon is found in many fields of endeavour. Some politicians, for instance, have blackmailed, smeared the names of their opponents, framed them up, unlawfully detained people, maimed, killed people, etc., just to have a particular position, peace of mind invariably. Momentarily, they seem to have their way but often times, in one way or the other they are caught up with their evil deeds and the momentary pleasure they enjoyed vanishes only for them to discover that they are far from the peace of mind they sought for by doing evil to their opponents. In the field of academics, some student will take to examination malpractices ranging from copying from other students' work in the examination hall or during personal assignments to inducing lecturers either in cash or kind. At that moment, the student enjoys relative pleasure. But time comes when he or she regrets such actions when he or she is faced with that which he or she is supposed to have known but is unknown to them through their sharp practices. At that point they are faced with stark reality of their bad actions and the resultant effect is lack of peace of mind. They will find themselves wallowing in regrets and sorrows. It is equally applicable to a lecturer who does not follow the ethics of the profession. Who goes around extorting money from innocent, poor students in order to make ends meet, who does not follow the path of intellectual honesty but does things in anyhow manner just to escape the task of the moment. Such lecturers enjoy momentary pleasure but ultimately regret their actions when their deeds are eventually discovered. At that juncture, the supposed peace of mind the lecturer thought he or she had got is seen to be a total mirage. Friends have betrayed one another in pursuit of one gain or the other thinking that peace of mind will result only to discover more disharmony in their minds. Many people in the midst of hardship, suffering have engaged themselves in some sharp practices in order to escape the reality of the moment under the illusion of having peace of mind, but in the end, they discovered that more trouble, more anxiety and undue pressure have dogged their lives. Some, jealous and envious of others' progress have resorted to using *Ogwu*. What is *Ogwu*? *Ogwu* is translated into English language to mean "Charm". This is charm in its peculiar harmful understanding in the sense that it affects its victims so terribly bad that the victim is condemned to be under the mercy of the person possessing the charm (*Ogwu*). It is not charm in the understanding of attractiveness or pleasantness. It is a kind of magnetic field, a compulsive pull that exists between the victim and the person having it that the former is influenced, controlled as if he/she is bereft of reason of his/her own. Equally, "*Ogwu*" in Igbo ontology is understood as medicine as well. It is medicine applied in preventing, curing and protecting human health. Also, it is understood to mean a harmful and aggressive medicine used against the good of the other. In this discourse,

Ogwu understood in the latter sense and meaning charm in the negative sense, signifying infliction of negative, harmful influences on people which often end in bad state of affairs for the victims, is what the writers have in mind here. According to Adibe: “*Ogwu*” is an Igbo word that in English chiefly means medicine and “charm”, “when it is used as charm it also means poison, a means of harming and terminating life [24]”. Some people have used this phenomenon, *Ogwu*, out of envy and jealousy, to render other human beings useless or even killed them thinking that such actions will give them peace of mind having cleared from their road their perceived enemies. But that rather worsens the situation. Instances are endless!

People have engaged in bad actions, confusing momentary joy with peace of mind not knowing that peace of mind is a habit that is to be cultivated, nurtured over time and it becomes the second nature of the individual. Peace of mind is not a happenstance phenomenon, it is not got by chance, it comes out of the conscious effort of an individual. That is why philosophy understood in its second order activity dove tails well as a powerful tool, instrument in creating peace of mind. How does philosophy do this? In the course of this discourse, philosophy in its second order activity is seen to mean man’s conscious critical reflections on human experiences, on tangible and intangible beings, etc., and how man understands and interprets the reality around him. That is to say, philosophy in this unique understanding, that this paper adopts, connotes painstaking conscious effort, criticality, systematicity, coherence, reflexiveness and methodology. It is through these ways that peace of mind is cultivated and enjoyed, philosophy wise. Philosophy having many branches, one may ask, which branch or branches of philosophy best, when strictly followed, creates peace of mind? This is found mainly in moral/ethics and critical thinking (Logic) aspects of philosophy. Moral/ethics aspect of philosophy: morality concerns itself with the cultivation, development of tendencies, habits. That is, the habits, tendencies of right thinking, right choice, and right behaviour, conduct. In terms of moral/ethics area of philosophy, the thoughts of eminent philosophers come in handy to buttress the point being underscored here. These thoughts came out of strict compliance to the procedures mentioned above in terms of second order activity understanding of philosophy. Through these procedures they adduced ageless wisdom capable of guiding one towards the achievement, establishment of peace of mind. Out of conscious critical reflections, Socrates came to this ageless life illuminating and enhancing saying that virtue means fulfilling of one’s function. That is to say, as a rational, thinking being, an individual’s function is to act, behave rationally [25]. It means that for peace of mind to exist in one’s life, one must have sufficient reason for doing whatever one wants to do. Actions must not be performed haphazardly. One must not be beclouded by emotions when doing certain actions. It means that one must be ever calculative in one’s actions and not move sheepishly with the crowd, doing something because others are doing it. It means weighing the alternatives there are before making a choice and that choice must be informed by due consideration. It means that one must be fully in the know in whatever one does, that is to say that, one must consciously and critically look through options there are before any decision is taken, any choice is made, any path of action is followed. Fulfilling one’s function according to Socrates calls for thorough examination of ideas, concepts, and strategies before one, and that is why he believes and argues that, “no unexamined idea is worth having any more than the unexamined life is worth living [26]”. It therefore means that peace of mind that is worth its name is the one that comes by conscious effort, that is habitual and not by chance, not occasioned by careless attitude to issues of life. It is a methodical, reflective approach that one adopts as plump line in one’s existential living. It does not come by mere memorization of wise sayings. It is something worked for by imbibing and making it part and parcel of oneself the principles of conscious critical reflections- the hallmarks of philosophy- in whatever one does.

The import of Socrates’ discourse above echoes the use of rationality primarily. Stumpf and Fieser expatiate this import in the philosophy of Plato saying that, it is, therefore, the outstanding duty of reason to burrow into the world of fantasy and unearth the true world, and as such, turn the passions to objects of love that are capable of giving true pleasure and true happiness. Furthermore, that when people confound appearance with reality, they become unhappy (lack of peace of mind) and suffer a complete confusion of the

human soul. This disorder happens primarily when our passions usurp our reason. That is why, say Stumpf and Fieser that, Plato argued, as Socrates did before him, that moral evil is the outcome of ignorance. Summarizing Plato's idea on this they say, "Our human souls can achieve order and peace only if our rational part- our reason- is in control of our spirit and appetites [27]".

Toeing the same line of rationality, Aristotle amplifies it from the angle of virtue being the golden mean. For him, human passions have the capability of bringing to the fore multiple range of action, from one extreme to another extreme, that is, from too little to too much. Giving an instance of our appetites for food, Aristotle says, on the one hand, people can be controlled by an excessive desire to eat; on the other hand, people can have a deficiency in appetite for food to the extent of not eating at all, starvation. The right path of action to follow- that is, the virtuous course- is a middle ground or mean between excess and deficiency. When people are unable to actualize this middle ground, they become liable to the vices of excess or of deficiency. People should, therefore, control their passions via the rational power of the soul, and as such, cultivate virtuous habits, tendencies that bring them unbiddenly to follow the middle course. Instantiating his postulation, Aristotle says, the virtue of courage, is the middle course between two vices: cowardice (a deficiency) and rashness (an excess). "Virtue, then, is a state of being, 'a state apt to exercise deliberate choice, being in the relative mean, determined by reason, and as the person of practical wisdom would determine' [28]".

For the stoics, happiness (peace of mind) is buried in the wisdom which implores us to control what lies within our human ability and to allow with total resignation what is not within our human ability to take its natural course. "We cannot control all events, but we can control our attitude toward what happens. It is useless to fear future events, for they will happen in any case. But it is possible by an act of will to control our fear. We should not, therefore, fear events-- in a real sense we have 'nothing to fear but fear itself' [29]". This wisdom of the stoics is borne out of the characteristics that mark philosophy in its second order activity-- the preferred notion in this discourse-- that is, habitual conscious critical reflections.

To wrap up this section of instrumentality of philosophy to peace of mind, recourse to the outcome of Boethius' encounter with philosophy comes in handy here. Stumpf and Fieser summarize it thus: "Boethius is consoled by philosophy when he discovers from it that no earthly goods and pleasures can give him true happiness, that he must turn to the Supreme Good to which philosophy leads [30]". The supreme good that philosophy leads to is peace of mind especially when one follows strictly the procedures marshaled out as principles of philosophy in its second order activity understanding. It is through them that one can live and be in peace of mind.

Critical thinking/logic: as an aspect of philosophy towards peace of mind. Brooke Noel Moore and Richard Parker asked the following question, what tangibly and pin pointedly is critical thinking all about? In answer they say, when one takes a stand on an issue, one avers or claims something. The claim and the reasoning on which it is premised are open to rational evaluation. When one does that evaluation, questioning to bring out the strengths and weaknesses therein, one is thinking critically. To think critically, therefore, Moore and Parker maintain that an individual needs to know: 1. When somebody is taking a stand on an issue, what that issue is all about, and what the individual is laying claim to in relation to the issue at stake; 2. Consideration of relevant subjects to that issue; 3. Whether the reasoning guiding what is claimed is good enough; and 4. Whether when all necessary considerations are made, an individual should accept, not accept or suspend judgement on what is claimed. In sum, they maintain that doing all this entails levelheadedness and objectivity on the part of the individual and that the individual should not be swayed by extraneous, irrelevant factors [31]. The above guidelines help an individual to navigate and see clearly through the labyrinths of ideas meant to deceive; they help the individual to make right decisions; be able to articulate ideas to the other clearly and at the end, peace of mind results. With critical thinking, one does not follow the crowd or do things or follow the events and incidents of life sheepishly without defined direction. It imbues one with the ability to listen and question issues critically and not swallowing them lock, stock and barrel.

In these manners, that is, philosophy, especially in its aspects of moral/ethical and critical thinking (logic) creates enduring peace of mind through its strict procedures of personal conscious critical reflections.

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this piece, in order to show that philosophy is naturally tailored towards peace of mind, the writers started by explicating the key terms involved in the discourse after which they showed in earnest how philosophy especially in its second order activity understanding leads to peace of mind. They maintained that for enduring peace of mind to occur in an individual, the individual must cultivate the habit of personal conscious critical reflections-- the hallmarks of philosophy-- on things around him or her. It is in this particular way that philosophy proves superior to other means of creating peace of mind in the sense that it teaches the individual how he or she can work consciously in cultivating the required habit and not just memorizing the nuggets given by some people. It is through this conscious effort that an individual is at peace with himself or herself having become conscious of what is around him or her and at the same time knowing the best approach to tackle them.

By way of recommendation, it is the opinion of the writers here that this philosophy should be taught in such a manner that there is no assumed godhead image by the teachers. That is to say, the mode of teaching should be interactive, dialogical so that the people being taught will be involved in it and learn by interacting with the teacher, not where the teacher stands as all-knower and be reeling out lecture notes without active participation from the learners. Again, as adduced in the course of this discourse, moral/ethical and critical thinking (logic) aspect of philosophy should be taught in its strictures so that people will be imbued with the critical mind that will enable them to shun all kinds of ills in the society especially the ills of corruption, ethnicity, favouritism, etc., thereby creating a general atmosphere of peace for all.

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