METAPHYSICS RE-INSTATED

Prof. Dr. Mohammed Maruf

I

The first systematic rejection of Metaphysics as a branch of knowledge came from Immanuel Kant in his famous Critique of Pure Reason (1781)80 wherein he based his rejection on his critical analysis of the Pure Reason. It was in "The Transcendental Dialectic" Book II that he subjected to scrutiny the Pure Reason and concluded that Transcendental Psychology Transcendental Cosmology, and Pure Theology are impossible to comprehend, because there is no experience to occasion them and corroborate them⁸¹. He also made a distinction between (a) Phenomenon, Noumenon⁸² and (b) Sensible Intuition and Intellectual Intuition⁸³. Of the latter intuition he says that the intellectual, which is not that which we possess, and of which we cannot comprehend even the possibility⁸⁴ and this leads him to the conclusion that man cannot have the knowledge of the Noumenon, which is comprehensible through Intellectual Intuition only. Kant, however, has been largely misunderstood, because what he has denied the possibility of on the basis of his presuppositions in the field of Pure Reason, he has reaffirmed in his Critique of Practical Reason 85, where God the Immorality of the Soul and the freedom positively considered as Practical Postulates.86 In fact, Kant has accepted these Postulates to support his Moral Ideal or Summum Bonum, which is a Composite End.

Kant was followed by Soren Kierkegaard (1813 - 1855) who was averse to all system building and was against that Professors would be teaching his thought in the Universities. His two books *Philosophical Fragments* (1844) and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846) 'present as directly and methodically as can be expected the philosophical thinking of a man whose method is

⁸⁰ Eng. Tr. Norman K. Smith, (London: Mcmillan, 1963.

⁸¹ Ibid, pp. 162-63

⁸² Ibid, pp. 266-67.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 268

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Eng. Tr. T. K. Abbott, (London: Longman Green, 1957).

⁸⁶ Ibid, pp. 229-30.

indirect and whose philosophy is not a system'. 87 But, despite his protest, the Movement he originated culminated in elaborate and highly complicated systems of Martin Heidegger's Existence and Being (1949)⁸⁸ and J. P. Sartre's Being and Nothingness (1957)⁸⁹ which are not easy to follow even for a serious student of philosophy. Another reaction against philosophical systems, especially Hegelianism, which originated from an interaction between the Cambridge School of Analysis and the Vienna Circle in the early 1930's, was named Logical Positivism⁹⁰ (At least the term appeared in 1930's though with some qualifications). However, its application in the fields of morality, metaphysics and religion came as late as 1936 when A. J. Ayer first published his classical work Language, Truth and Logic (London)⁹¹ and The Foundation of Empirical Knowledge (1940). The basis of this school was the famous "Verifiability Principle" which enables its votaries to make an incisive distinction between the "meaningful" and "meaningless" or "nonsense" statements.94 However, A. J. Ayer was compelled to admit Indirect Verification⁹⁵ also which rendered the whole criterion so vast and "loose" that many of the moral, religious and metaphysical utterances could pass for "meaningful" statements. What led him to this concession was that the original Principle was too rigid to pass even for truth some of the most established hypotheses of science, e.g., the axis of the earth and its inclination at 45 degrees. However, in fairness to Logical Positivists, they could very ably project the case for empiricism. But the question arises what necessitated the emergence of these reactions against traditional metaphysical systems? Why a need for them was felt which purported to demolish time-honoured philosophical systems like that of Aristotle, Hegel, and so on. A close examination of these reactions will show that they are reactions against systems like Hegelianism, which has its inspiration from, and may be deemed as a logical consequence of, the philosophical systems of Plato, who was

⁸⁷ Blackham H. J., Six Existentialist Thinkers, (London: Routlege & Kegan Pul, 1961), p. 2.

⁸⁸ Eng. Tr. D. Scott, RF.C. Hull & A. Crick, (London, 1949).

⁸⁹ Eng. Tr. E. Barns, (London, 1957).

⁹⁰ Passmore J., A Hundred Years of Philosophy, (Penguin, 1980)' pp. 368-69.

^{91 (}London: Victor Golloncz, 1946).

^{92 (}London: Macmillan, 1940).

⁹³ This Principle was first formulated by F. Waismann in 1930. See Passmore, ibid, pp. 368-69. A. J. Ayer, then, developed it in his famous treatise *Language, Truth and Logic* (1946).

⁹⁴ Ayer, ibid., p. 3.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

rightly called the Father of Idealism in the West: it was Platonic system which, during all these centuries, developed and culminated in Hegel's Absolutism, followed by his followers. These reactions have nothing to do with the First Philosophy of Aristotle, whose philosophical system cannot properly be dubbed as Idealism, though there, no doubt, is an element of Idealism in his system. The modem philosophers are often misled into thinking that their movement is a reaction against Aristotle's 'First Philosophy', and in this short paper my main object is to refute this misconstruction. Thus, I have decided to devote Second Section of my paper to as true an exposition of Aristotle's metaphysical philosophy as is possible.

Before taking it up, it is necessary to discuss another movement called Linguistic Analysis or Philosophy, which is 'An approach to philosophy that holds that a careful study of how language is actually used, taught, and developed in everyday discourse can illuminate, or even transform or dissolve, time-honoured philosophical problems. These problems are seen as arising, often if not invariably, because thinkers, misled by superficial grammatical similarities or their own fondness for uniformity, have ignored relevant differences in the functions of terms and hence misused them...⁹⁷ The Linguistic Philosophy was popularized by Wittgenstein and then developed by Carnap (The Logical Syntax of Language), 99 J. L. Austin, 100 and Gilbert Ryle¹⁰¹ (*Plato's Progress*, 1966), etc. However, a close scrutiny of this philosophy will reveal that it originated in the West with Socrates who was the first to emphasize the need for defining terms precisely which are being used in the discourse and arguments to render thought crystal clear. Today, the Continental philosophy has developed into Post–Structuralism and Post-Modernism¹⁰² of thinkers like Michel Foucault (1926-1984), 103 Ferdinand de

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⁹⁶ See Aristotle's "Metaphysics" in *A New Aristotle Reader*, ed. J. L. Ackrill, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 255fI.

⁹⁷ Flew A., (ed.), A Dictionary of Philosophy (Pan Books, 1982) pp. 188-89.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 189.

⁹⁹ Rudolf Carnap (1891-1970), a German positivist.

¹⁰⁰ Flew, ibid., p. 189.

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² West David, An Introduction To Continental Philosophy, (Polity Press, 1996), pp. 154 ff & 189ff.

¹⁰³ Ibid, pp. 168-69.

Saussure (1857-1913)¹⁰⁴ Jacques Lacan (1901-1981)¹⁰⁵ and Jacques Derrida (1930-).¹⁰⁶ Foucault has tried to philosophize away 'the Subject';¹⁰⁷ Saussure has replaced the 'Signified' by the 'Signifier' and thus has turned knowledge into something superficial;¹⁰⁸ Lacan has reduced human "I" or Self to mere mirror-image which he has identified with "imago";¹⁰⁹ while Derrida puts up Post-Structuralism, as against Structuralism, which, he says, 'is a philosophy of Becoming rather than of Being; it is endlessly dynamic, allowing us no escape or apparent respite from the shifting play of meanings'.¹¹⁰ The worst type of Philosophy in our times has been the feminist philosophy which bases its reasoning on the structural differences between male and female to prove inferiority of the latter.¹¹¹ Thus, they have demolished any permanence in human Self, thought and reality; they have done away with any stable 'referent'; in short, they have brought philosophy once again at the crossroads.

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What is my main object in this paper is to reinstate Aristotle's First Philosophy in its true paces, whom I deem as one of the miracles of God. Unfortunately, during all these centuries, his thought has been badly and largely distorted - a fact which dawned on me when I read his original text. Aristotle has been very clear and consistent in his exposition of his thought. In the Ethics, he makes a very fine distinction between art and science which stems from experience. He says 'that experience is knowledge of individuals, art of universals, and actions and productions are all concerned with the individual;...' He cites the case of a physician who cures individuals; and if he knows the theory without experience, 'he will often fail to cure, for it is

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¹⁰⁴ Ibid, pp. 165-66.

¹⁰⁵ Richard Kearney & Mara Rainwater (ed.), *The Continental Philosophy Reader*, (Routlege: London & New York, 1996), p. 328..

¹⁰⁶ West, op. cit. p. 178.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 168ff.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 178.

¹⁰⁹ Kearney, op. cit., 330 ff.

¹¹⁰ West, op. cit, p. 180

¹¹¹ Robert Audi (Chief Editor), The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy, (Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 305-06.

¹¹² Ackrill, op. cit., p. 256.

the individual that is to be cured'. However, 'we think that knowledge and understanding belong to art rather than to experience, and we suppose artists to be wiser than men of experience (...); and this is because the former know the cause, but the latter do not, for the men of experience know that this is so, but do not know why,...' According to Aristotle, 'the masterworkers in each craft are more honourable and know in a truer sense and are wiser than the manual-workers, because they know the causes of the things that are done...'

Again, Aristotle stresses that 'in general it is the sign of the man who knows, that he can teach, and therefore, we think art more truly knowledge than experience is; for artist can teach, men of mere experience cannot'. Again, Aristotle adds, arts which 'were directed to the necessities of life' were regarded Inferior in respect of wisdom than those which are directed' to its recreation, the inventors of the latter were always regarded as wiser than the inventors of the former, because their branches of knowledge did not aim at utility'. However, he assigns due importance to other branches of knowledge. He says, 'we do not regard any of the senses as wisdom; yet surely these give the most authoritative knowledge of particulars. But they do not tell us the 'why' of anything e.g., why fire is hot; they only say that it is hot'. He adds, 'All the sciences, indeed, are more necessary than this, but none is better'. Thus, Aristotle assigns due place to all the branches of knowledge, but for him the 'First Philosophy' is the most superior.

Aristotle holds that philosophy begins, and originally began, with wonder; 'And a man who is puzzled and wonders thinks himself ignorant (. .); therefore they philosophized in order to escape from ignorance, evidently they were pursuing science in order to know, and not for any utilitarian end'. He adds, the science 'which investigates causes is ... more capable of teaching, for the people who teach are those who tell the causes of each

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

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¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 256-57.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 256.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 259.

¹²⁰ Ibid, p.259.

thing. And understanding and knowledge pursued for their own sake are found most in the knowledge of that which is most knowable;...; and the first principles and causes are most knowable; for by reason of these and from these all other things are known, but these are not known by means of the things subordinate to them'. 121 Thus, theoretical sciences are more of wisdom than the practical sciences, according to Aristotle. He goes on to hold 'theoretical kinds of knowledge to be more of the nature of wisdom than the productive. Clearly then wisdom is knowledge about certain causes and principles'. 122 Not only that the most exact science deals with the causes and first principles; again those 'which involve fewer principles are more exact than those which involve additional principles, e.g., arithmetic than geometry'. 123 This point is very important in modem science which amply bears it out. A student of physics knows well that originally physicists believed that there were four fundamental forms of energy; the gravitational energy, the electromagnetic energy, and the two forms of nuclear energy, the so-called weak and strong. Dr. Abdus Salam, the Nobel Laureate, and his team succeeded in reducing the electromagnetic energy and the weak form of nuclear energy to only one. He says, 'In our view, there should be no basic distinction between electricity and nuclear forces. We said they were simply identical'. 124 Their claim was confirmed by experiments conducted in the world-renowned laboratories in Geneva, U.S.A., and U.S.S.R. and Dr. Salam was conferred the Nobel Prize in 1979. This unified force is called the Electro weak force. 125 His and his team's final aim is to reduce all kinds of forces to one single force. This is nothing but reducing the number of 'First Principles' the need for which Aristotle stressed centuries ago.

It is generally believed that for Aristotle 'substance' was the study of the' First Philosophy'. He used a word in Greek language which has been translated into 'ousia'. Later, this word was rendered into Latin by substantia; Cicero proposed the alternative essentia, which also won its way into

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid, p. 257.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ghani Dr Abdul, *Abdus Salam: A Nobel Laureate*, (Karachi: Maarif Printers, 1982)., p. 163.

¹²⁵ Ibid, p. 164: 'The fact that we have been seeking for a unity among the seemingly disparate forces of nature, is part of our faith as physicists and of mine as a Muslim. And to be thus privileged to comprehend a part of Allah's design is a grace and a privilege for which I render humble thanks to Allah'.

philosophical discussion. The history of the word then became complicated by the usage of theologians'. 126 However, Aristotle used the word 'substance' for the 'individual' or subject in the logical sense; for other entities like genus and species he used the term quasi-substance. 127 Again, he says that 'There is a discipline which studies that which is qua thing-that-is and those things that hold good of this in its own right. That is not the same as any of what are called the special disciplines. For none of the others examines universally that which is qua thing-that-is, but all select some part of it and study what is accidental concerning that;... 'The discipline that deals with 'that which is qua thing-that-is is nothing but philosophy or, what Aristotle called, the First Philosophy'. 128 But the prerequisite for knowing this science is complete freedom and, he adds, 'as the man is free, we say, who exists for himself and not for another, so we pursue this as the only free science, for it alone exists for itself. 129 However, he adds that 'the possession of it might be justly regarded as beyond human power; for in many ways human nature is in bondage;..., 130

According to Simonides "God alone can have this privilege"...' Aristotle, however, adds that this is the most divine science and is also most honourable'. Commenting on Aristotle's concept of God A. H. Armstrong writes in his *An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy*, 'It is simply the logical culmination of the hierarchy of substances and the ultimate explanation of motion and change. But it is not a person or power exercising providence, ordering all things by its will. Still less is it a Creator. . .'132 He adds, Aristotle's thought is not really God-centred, but Cosmos-centred'. 133

Thus, our study of Aristotle's original thought on the 'First Philosophy' reveals why he placed it after physics, for he assigned due importance and authority to other disciplines, including those which are derived from senses,

¹²⁶ Allan D.J., The Philosophy of Aristotle, (London: Oxford Press, 1963) pp. 104-05.

¹²⁷ Ibid, pp. 108-09.

¹²⁸ Ackrill, op. cit., pp. 261-62.

¹²⁹ Ibid,p. 259.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid, p. 258.

¹³² Armstrong A. H., An Introduction To Ancient Philosophy, (London: Methuen UP., 1965), p. 90.

¹³³ Ibid.

because 'surely these give the most authoritative knowledge of particulars;' though 'for him "the First Philosophy" is the most superior;' it deals with the first causes and the principles of things, and adds that 'those which involve fewer principles are more exact than those which involve additional principles,..." However, what is generally neglected, though it is extremely important, is that' Aristotle assigns due importance to other sciences also when he says, "All the sciences, indeed, are more necessary than this, but none is better". Thus, he assigns due importance to all those disciplines which are pursued for some end or utility; he did not reject them as mere "opinions" or useless like Plato.

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After having stated Aristotle's position the question arises how corruption occurred during all these centuries which aroused so much hue and cry against metaphysics? We have seen that Aristotle never used the term 'Metaphysics' for his 'First Philosophy'. 'It was apparently

Andronicus who gave the name *Metaphysics* to Aristotle's treatise on First Philosophy, because it was ranked after the *Physics* in his edition;...¹³⁵ In fact, present day Metaphysics, which later on assumed the meaning of

'beyond physical,' had its origin in Platonic World of Ideas. Christian world drew its inspiration from Plato and the neo-Platonists, and tried to understand Christian dogmas in its light. In contrast to Plato's superlunary World of Ideas, the Churchmen like Albert of Bollstadt (1193- 1280), and St. Thomas Aquinas (1225 or 1227-1274) placed those Ideas or Forms in the Mind of God. St. Thomas, like Albert, agrees with Aristotle in conceiving Ideas, or Forms, or universals as immanent in the mind of God,...' Again, John Duns Scotus (1274-1308) more emphatically says, 'Universals exist before *things*, as forms in the mind of God; in things, as their essence or general nature; and after things, as abstract concepts in our minds.' So, this is how metaphysics began to be converted into theology and religious concepts like God, Hereafter, etc., came to be part of metaphysics, and became object of severe criticism at the hands of movements during the last

¹³⁴ Ackrill, op. cit., p. 257.

¹³⁵ Allan, op. cit., p. 102.

¹³⁶ Thill Y F., A History of Philosophy, (Allahabad: Central Book Dep., 1958), p. 229.

¹³⁷ Ibid, p. 243.

two centuries, and unfortunately, it came to earn a bad name. But why modern thinkers became conscious of these problems about metaphysics and began to assail it from all possible quarters?

Prof. Ivor Leclerc, Prof. Emeritus of Philosophy, Emori University, Atlanta (U.S.A.) in his paper "The Issue of the Nature of Metaphysics" has taken much pains to trace the development of those trends which have tried to impugn metaphysical problems. In the first place, he writes, 'In the Hellenistic period, and indeed among Aristotle's immediate followers, the basic emphasis was put on the *ousia* which was held to be primary, namely the Divine That is, with this answer to the question of 'what is that which is in *this* sense,' metaphysics essentially became theology, i.e., the 'object' of metaphysics was God'. This gave it an objectionable look for the scientific mind which refused to go beyond the 'physical.' The prefix 'meta' assumed a meaning during the Middle Ages which was not in accord with Aristotle's doctrine. 'Relevant here is', says Prof. Leclerc, 'that it was particularly this interpretation which in the eighteenth century came to be rejected'. 139

The question arises how metaphysics fell into disrepute? The question whether or not metaphysics is a valid enterprise has faced us for the last two centuries and still is most prominently facing the philosophical community today, for I, somehow, believe that no metaphysics means no philosophy in its proper sense. This issue arose early in the nineteenth century as the outcome of the development of physics as a mechanics, that development which had initiated with Galilio and by the end of the seventeenth century had achieved a significant peak with Newton, and which reached its perfection by the end of the eighteenth century with Laplace. 140

And with this started the drive to purge the science of mechanics of all philosophical and metaphysical concepts like force, cause, law, etc., and were replaced with quantitative concepts. The impact of science on philosophy was variously manifested and, as said before, the result was the emergence of positivistic trends in philosophy which took various forms, e.g., logical positivism, neo-positivism, empirico-criticism, analytical philosophy, and so

¹³⁸ Leclerc I., Sutherland S. & T.A. Roberts, *Religion, Reason and the Self,* (Cardiff University of Wales Press' 1989), p. 95.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 912.

on. Another change which emerged in philosophy 'was the turning of philosophy to epistemology as fundamental. This movement of thought, in which the influence of Kant and Hume were prominent, has on the whole been decidedly anti-metaphysical, or at best not sympathetic to metaphysics." However, Aristotle had a great insight when he sounded a warning at that time that is so early, that 'mathematics has come to be the whole philosophy for modem thinkers, though they say that it should be studied for the sake of other things'. This warning has come true today and, let me add that it has completely corrupted philosophy. As I said before, today philosophy is at the cross-roads as it has no anchor to stand upon, and I am afraid that we are moving towards "scientism" which will be a death-blow to the true spirit of philosophy. It is high time for the people of philosophy, which is not possible without a resuscitation of metaphysics in the sense in which Aristotle presented it about three thousand years ago.

IV

We should keep in mind that philosophy and science are two disparate human activities which one undergoes in his daily life. Science, as everyone knows, is descriptive and predictive, while philosophy is evaluative and critical (the two kinds of activities which each human being undertakes in his everyday life); and how these two diametrically different activities can be confounded with one another, I fail to understand. This, however, does not mean that they have nothing to do with one another, because the two activities often go hand -in -hand in most of the human intellectual endeavours As Iqbal says, 'They stem from the same root and compliment each other, However, unfortunately the two kinds of activities have been confounded and mixed up for over last two centuries-an attempt which will lead to a complete debacle in the two fields, for even science is sure to suffer in the long run. In one of the toughest interviews of my life I was asked if there was a place for philosophy in the world of unparalleled achievements of science, especially technology. I replied to this tricky question in the affirmative and said, When a philosopher collects his data and organizes

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¹⁴¹ Ibid, p. 92.

¹⁴² Smith J.A & Ross W.D., The Works Of Aristotle, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), p. 992a.

¹⁴³ Flew A., op. cit., p. 298.

¹⁴⁴ Reconstruction, p. 2.

them, he is in the realm of science; but when a scientist proceeds to draw conclusions from his data to arrive at general principles, he is in the realm of philosophy. The two forms of processes musty go hand-in-hand else there will be no knowledge in the proper sense.' Thus, the two activities go side by side, and both are inevitable. While talking of metaphysics, we should keep in mind that Aristotle never left the 'physical' behind to take a jump into the supraphysical realm as Plato did. As we have seen before, he assigned due importance to experience, and then tried to rise beyond, rather draw out of them, a universal study of the 'being' or 'thing-that-is'. Prof. Leclerc has endorsed it in the following words: '... characterizing Aristotle's own view of that field-which he himself referred to as prote philosophia, 'primary philosophy' - namely the set of issues and problems which are arrived at *meta*, 'after' the study of the physical, arising out of that study, but going 'beyond' the physic This field extends beyond that of the physical in not being concerned, as is the physical inquiry, with particular kind of things, but deals with all beings (ta onta), that is, it considers being universally (katholou) qua being (he on). 145 The criticism, on the contrary, applies to those attempts which left the physical or experienced totally behind and tried to sore into a world, a heavenly world, as was done by Plato and his followers down to the Absolutism of Hegel; they do fall within the purview of that criticism which has been brought against metaphysics— meta in the sense of 'beyond' the physical reality. It is these thinkers who have been building airy castles, which is, in my view, neither metaphysics nor science.

I conclude my discussion once again with very pertinent remarks of Prof. Leclerc who says, 'For what has come to be necessary today is an effective partnership of the natural sciences and metaphysics, since not only neither of these is as autonomous as has been believed for the last two centuries, but they are also mutually necessary to each other'; ¹⁴⁶ a need which Allama Iqbal emphasized over sixty years before Prof. Leclerc in his famous *Lectures* and more emphatically in that magnum opus *Javed-Namah*, where

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¹⁴⁵ Leclerc, op. cit., p. 94.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 101.

¹⁴⁷ His Lecture entitled "The Conception of God and the Meaning of Prayer", p. 92 delivered at Hyderabad (India) on 15-01-1929 where he writes: 'Vision without power does bring moral elevation but cannot give a lasting culture. Power without vision tends to become destructive and inhuman. Both must combine for the spiritual expansion of humanity.

he says: '... Love-led can reason claim the Lord and reason-lit Love strikes firm roots. When integrated, these two draw the pattern of a different world'. ¹⁴⁸ I believe that this is the only attitude which can help in the progress of knowledge; I mean comprehensive knowledge, in today's world. The philosophy today is again at the crossroads as it was at the hands of Sophists, and we seriously need another Socrates to define the terms, and another Aristotle to put philosophy on its true and proper footings in order to render it genuine once again - a discipline which is worth studying as an independent and genuine intellectual endeavour.

¹⁴⁸ The Pilgrimage of Eternity, (Eng. Tr.) S. Mahmood Ahmad of Iqbal's Javaid-Namah, p. 54.