

Searching Knowledge through Philosophy

Rommel BC*

Graduate School and College Professor, Jose Rizal University, Philippines

***Corresponding author:** Rommel B de la Cruz, PhD, EdD, Graduate School and College Professor, Jose Rizal University, Philippines, Email: rainman_bc_2011@hotmail.com

Opinion

Volume 3 Issue 9

Received Date: December 08, 2018

Published Date: December 31, 2018

DOI: 10.23880/pprij-16000192

Opinion

It is a mess by itself, and it can make a mess out of your thinking. But fear not. The mess it makes the way you think can make you think at least clearly and discreetly, seeing some purpose in there being mess. Then from thereon gaining knowledge begins.

The above discourse is one way of describing how philosophers of bygone years would introduce uninitiated to the world of philosophy. Perhaps in the way they teach, this is how teachers in our time would edify their students about philosophy-knowingly or unknowingly. I was one of those individuals who first had to grope in the platonic darkness before I got a glimpse of what philosophers describe as the light of knowledge-or so.

The Three Sages

Plato thought that man in his ideal state is perfect and knows all things. Philosophy could help the latter break out from his present mundane cocoon, consisting of all those carnal thoughts and desires that have the ideal man in him (the transient man) in catatonic state. Only after this epiphany he ceases to be a replica of his "real" self. Plato advocated that his primary means to reach this ideal state is through contemplation, a communion with the inner self to be one with the realm of ideas.

Socrates, who alienated the intellectuals of his time who taught more to impress than to enlighten, believed that knowledge is already in man's mind, salted away there by God. The philosopher presented a method, which he claimed could quarry knowledge. Of course, in one technique of this method, he would encourage a knowledge seeker to think that all up there in one's head is a mess.

Aristotle thought that man is an embodiment of everything in his earthly state and that of which he seeks to attain. Having the faculty of reason though, an avatar of Supreme reason that stops man from effacing himself on the face of this world and lifts his spirit to yearn for total goodwill to all of his kind, the philosopher claimed man can be more than his complex nature. He can be the whole man, a man fully in control and in use of his rational abilities, while tempering the excesses of his emotions and urges. Aristotle proposed a different kind of contemplation-a contemplation that sees the eternal essence of things through perception and deep introspection of the things seen.

Aristotle and those who either were guided or were influenced by his philosophy seemed to put an end to one prevalently conceived purpose of philosophy-that was to buttress the pseudo-scientific worldview of the time. By then, the scientific worldview was still in its larval stage, gathering that wind of change, poised to topple the various towers of long-held "knowledge," both that of cultural myths and that of religious lore.

Aristotle was a different kind of philosopher. In Athens together with his student Theophrastus he built a huge botanical garden just to classify and examine flora. His theory that traits could be passed on through blood was an inveterate influence. For centuries according to a reference, people who spoke English thought about bloodlines and blood relatives because they believed heredity took place through blood. Indeed, Aristotle was one magnanimously conspicuous part of the giant, as Newton would later remark, on whose broad shoulders later geniuses have stood on to see the remotest peripheries of knowledge. On the achievement of Aristotle, David C. Linberg in "The Beginnings of Western Science" suggests that much of our modern world we owe from Aristotle and his philosophy.

During dusk of medieval period and the beginning of knowledge revolution, with scientific activities being frantically promoted by the Arabs with their “rediscovery” of Aristotle and with the former being retooled with Bacon method and Occham’s rason sharp logic, a new science emerged. With this development, what role philosophy would now play in the pursuit of knowledge?

Philosophy and Research

Three philosophies that are notably involved in the development of contemporary research are positivism, relativism, and realism. Positivism is a philosophy that champions the new science. It shuns what cannot be seen, downgrading it because it cannot be observed. It seeks patterns and laws in the visible phenomenon through statistical precisions-frequency, distribution, and deviation. On the other hand, relativism denies the objectivity of the phenomenon to be observed. Perception of it relies on the subjectivity of the observer. To gain knowledge out of the research enterprise, he is under the influence of his concepts and theories, a filter through which a scientific activity is done. And, finally, realism conceives of phenomenon to be observed as more than the sum of its parts, and that to observe it with such claim of infallible precision is untenable. Reality where

knowledge is absorbed is indeed real but it could appear both as the product and the process, blended and dissolved with each other, an embodiment of both substance and form, impossible to examine without being misled and confused. Thus, for a realist, knowledge is just an expression of confusion that may endlessly recoil, always searching but never really finding.

Knowledge could be arrived not only from one of these philosophies but even those discussed above and those that not discussed in this article. They are all needed. It is, in a sense, knowledge when caution is heeded that there is no claim of its completeness and of its immutableness. Obtaining knowledge though looking for law-like patterns, through comparison and differentiation, may make an observer unaware that knowledge could also leap out from those absent, from those ignored, and from those derelict in the epistemological edges. Knowledge can be known through intuition. The modern civilization is ever paying homage to intuition that has led to knowledge breakthrough, though of course the celebration is not that loud. Roaring louder is that applause for the positivist science because man usually thinks he has by his cunning figured out it by himself. It is one occasion he wants to be alone-joyful in a company of his vanity.

