

Humanities Interface with Science: A Matter of Necessity

Maduabuchi Dukor

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Department of Philosophy Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Nigeria. Email. madudukor@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

What many may have believed to be a widening gulf or gap between the Humanities and the Science in which the latter is seen to be eclipsing the former is only a phenomenon created by ignorance. Ignorance here is either the absence of reason, the inability of reason to interrogate a phenomenon systemically or analytically with the ultimate objective of finding out 'what is' and 'what ought to be'. Reason can be defined as understanding which is and only is the property and quality of human faculty. Immanuel Kant in his Critique of Pure Reason would define reason as the manifestation of sensibility and understanding but in the narrow sense refers to the human intellect as seeking the unconditional principle of the unity of all objects of experience, a manifold, on the idea of God. It does follow that reason is anti-emotion and broaches the sentimental while electing itself to the perpetual engagement with external objects of the world and reality. This reason's engagement with the phenomenon is Humanities interface with Science and its supervening application called technology. Reason's modal relation to phenomenon just as Art's and humanities' interface with science and technology is a logical necessity in the world.

Keywords: Humanities, philosophy, science, arts

INTRODUCTION

Art is aimed at evolving emotion and it is also a science to some extent. Humanities similarly, studies human culture such as literature, philosophy, history and visual, auditory or performing art. Therefore, the minstrel, music, poetry, arts and Humanities echoes, ebbs, edifies, beautifies and galvanizes both the innermost and sublime cubicle of human person and humanity. These arts and humanities including sciences are called philosophy in ancient Greek philosophy. The Humanities and Arts promote three things which are certainly desired as ends in themselves namely, truth, goodness, and beauty, and perhaps happiness which are called ultimate values (Joad, 1935) which as a genre of Humanities have assumed the forms of music, painting, sculpture, literature and poetry, and has had an "effect upon the lives of human beings second in importance only to religion (Joad, 1935). Indeed Humanities' interface with science is a matter of necessity and cannot be abrogated. It is an ontological and epistemological necessity for the preservation of the planet earth, humanity, and the public sphere. When something is necessary, it means it is unavoidable, the conditionality of its relation with other

beings, animate and inanimate. It is an ontological relation. The Biblical / Quranic account of creation reveals the primordial roles of humanities as the primeval tapestry of reason in human judgment on other beings. Accordingly, or in the same vein, man as a *Dasein* is a being with possibilities who must of necessity interrogate other beings, Martin Heidegger would argue.

HUMANITIES and REASON

Can we assert that Humanities first asserted the primacy of reason in human affairs? I think we can go by anecdotes of the history of philosophy and science. Among the fathers of modernity and modern science reason under the ontic cynosure of humanities, called philosophy interrogated the primordial rudiment of science. Look at Kant's cleavage between analytic and synthetic truths. Hume's distinction between the relation of ideas and matters of fact and Leibniz distinction between truths of reason and truths of fact. They are all saying the same thing as the analytic ideas, truth of

reason and synthetic truths are the same as facts. These, Quine,(1999) caricatured as two dogmas of empiricism namely (a) why should there be a cleavage between truths which are analytic and truths which are synthetic? and (b) with the reductionism that every meaningful statement is equivalent to some logical construct which refers to immediate experience. For Quine it is ill-founded and an obvious blurring of boundaries between speculative metaphysics and natural science (Quine, 1999). It is pertinent to emphasise here that Kant in their distinctions between analytic and synthetic truths, relation of ideas and matters of act and truth of reason and truth of facts, respectively had inadvertently or advertently created a boundary between Humanities and science in order to erect a gulf between reason and phenomenon and differentiate speculative metaphysics (Humanities) from natural science but betrayed by the two dogmas of empiricism. The analytic ideas and truths of reason are all reason's soft wares and these soft wares are the furniture's and superstructures of humanities which individually evolved from philosophy and collectively subject to philosophy in the dialectical and dialogic process of second-order analysis. Kant might have created a dualism in knowledge reminiscent of Rene Descartes' *Methodic Doubt*, extended and non-extended entities, yet inadvertently rejected the primacy of reason in the analytic relation of ideas and truths to the synthetic and matters of facts. The modern period which these philosophers would be said to belong is, therefore, the period known for the bifurcation or dualisation of human nature as a composite being and the spread of scientific advances like a wildfire. The measurement, prediction and exploitation of nature became the driving force of civilization and the consequent eclipse of humanities until the denouement brought about by contemporary philosophies like Existentialism, Phenomenology Marxism and Postmodernism which instead address human existential and moral predicament in the face of science and technology.

HUMANITIES, ARTS and ASTRONOMY

The dialectical necessity of humanities and science can also be gauged from some astronomical theories. For instance, the Ptolemaic and Copernican astronomies constitute the dialectical interaction of the former and the later and their summit in the ontological oneness of humanities and science. According to Claudius Ptolemy, one of the greatest astronomer of the Roman Empire, the earth was the center of the universe and this view persisted for 1400 years until it was overturned by findings from Copernicus, Galileo and Newton. Copernicus (1543) reported the astronomical model called Heliocentrism "which positioned the sun near the center of the universe motionless with earth and other planets rotating around it in circular paths

modified by encycles and at uniform speeds. To corroborate the necessity of humanities interface with science it is important to delineate geocentric and heliocentric models of astronomy as tasks of metaphysics qua-humanities. Kant Copernican revolution as a metaphysical equipoise of Copernicus revolution is the metaphysical denouement and solution to the conflict between Ptolemaic and Copernicus astronomic models. For Copernicus, "though the sun appears to move across the earth from east to west, we cannot justifiably conclude from this that the earth is fixed and that the sun moves around a fixed earth, for the very good reason that the observed movement of the sun would be precisely the same (the same phenomenon) if it were the earth which was moving around the sun (Copleston, 1960). Suggesting the collaboration and necessity of humanities (as philosophy) interface with science, Immanuel Kant uses an astronomical phenomenon and metaphysics to explain the Heliocentric model. In the *critique of pure reason*, he further suggests that "empirical reality would remain what it is even on the hypothesis that for objects to be known (as an object of knowledge) they must conform to the mind rather than the other way about". That object of knowledge must conform to the mind is another way of saying that Copernican astronomy is explainable by subjectivity, intuition and *apriori* knowledge, that is, that the sun still moves observably even as the earth moves round the sun is the function of human subjectivity which is *apriori*. Kant is not however saying that things are created by the human mind but are comprehended by the human mind necessarily. This is to say that humanity and arts as a tapestry of human subjectivity are at the center of astronomy and Copernicus revolution. Again, Kant's fundamental questions about science and metaphysics and answers tended to underscore our point of emphasis on the humanities interface with science: In his *Critique of Pure Reason* he asks thus: first, how is pure mathematical science possible? Secondly, how pure is natural science or pure physics possible? Thirdly, how is metaphysics possible? Fourthly, is metaphysics considered as a science possible? (Copestone, 1960). For Kant, all these questions can be answered in affirmative so long as *apriori* knowledge and *synthetic apriori* judgments are possible through the imperatives of the human mind such as sensibility, understanding and space and time, that is, the subjective necessity of human faculty which is the tapestry of arts and humanities.

DEONTOLOGIZING ARTS and HUMANITIES

Deontologizing Arts and Humanities is a way mankind can humanize interface or science and technology. Barring any existential oversight and shortcoming, the task of humanities is to use arts, literary studies and ethics in a second-order inquiry to deontologize science

and technology that is, giving them a human face. There is a need for us to be concerned about how what we know as individuals affect human dignity. If we lack awareness of how we think, of how and why we construct our beliefs we may not be able to make the best possible decisions or clearly discern how we obtain and manage information shape our identities and self-perceptions. Art has some power over the human spirit. This is seen in the way great works of art continue to exert their influence through the ages unlike scientific discoveries and the achievement of generals and politicians which according to Karl Popper's theories of conjecture and refutation or falsification, are superseded by superior ones. For instance, Newton's theory of gravitation has been superseded by Einstein's theory of relativity. But with the works of art, it is not so. The poems of Homer, the music of Bach and the plays of Shakespeare remain the brand they were hundreds of years ago confirming the saying that a great work of art is "possession for all time" (Joad, 1935). This power of art over man's spirit and emotion is recognized by Plato who excludes "artists from the ideal state on the ground that they aroused emotions which are better left dominant" (Joad, 1935). But 'it is this emotion' that relive, reinvent and recreate man's sustaining values. Our personal relationship to knowledge plays an important role in determining our own level of freedom as well as our capacity for improving the lives of others (Magnani, 2007). One of the ways of humanizing science and technology is by imbibing ontological symmetry, synergy and sync between knowledge and duty because if we fail to interrogate issues, technology's soft and hard wares and man-made devices using Kantian categorical imperative or other philosophical tools, we deprive ourselves of a way to improve the lives of other people. Humanities restore freedom and responsibility governed by knowledge and duty in the determination of the limits and limitation of science and technology. This is the way Kantian categorical imperative the means justifies the end and his maxim-treat others as you will treat yourself can interrogate and interface science.

THE ARTIST and THE SCIENTIST

Humanities including arts and philosophy from antiquity to the contemporary time remain the burt of creativity enabling and directing the science. Beyond the physical, the creativity of science collapses with that of humanities and the latter takes the lead. Hence, humanities interrogate science. The power of literature is encompassing as that of painting and music because it reflects every aspect of human experience, science, technology and appeals to every side of human nature (Joad,1935). As Joad would argue; it can charm us with its beauty, as in lyric poetry of Shakespeare and Keats; enables us with its grandeur as in a great drama and tragedy of Sophocles, Racine and Shakespeare. In the

same way, it moves us to delighted laughter as in comedy of Moliere, Aristophanes and Shakespeare. Also it rouses us to a frenzy of indignation at the follies or the wickedness of mankind as in satire of Voltaire, Swift and Shaw and imbibe us with the determination to mould the world or inspire us with the ambition to achieve our heart's desire as in the works of imaginative idealism of Shalley, Blake and Shaw.

CONCLUSION

Whatever gulf or gap that had existed between the science and technology, behind the veneer of our mind is that arts and humanities perform necessary functions (a) it preserves the heart and soul of our civilization by teaching us to engage with ideas critically and independently through life-changing personal development that eschews conflicts that lead to wars (b) it transforms the experience of individuals, enabling them to understand their place in the world with deeper understanding (c) language and history underpins any effective political and social policy (d) literary canon narrative have absolute qualities interfacing with science. Arts and humanities have been of use as a powerful foil to project culture, peace, history and political and economic stability as well as the voice of the populace: Arts is used to tell the stories of today and how they give a sense of who the people of the present are and how they ought to manage and cope with life ethically, socially, economically and politically (e) Humanities' disciplines as courses in the tertiary institutions build capacities through teaching of the subjects like philosophy poetry, literature, history, religion and ethics to future leaders, scientists, artist and curators. Humanities activity is a function of the human mind in comprehending things. That is why Immanuel Kant says that things are not created by human mind which comprehends them.

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