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Article

Examination and Axiomatization of Substantive Stripping and Marginalization in W.V.O. Quine's Naturalized Epistemology and Continuity Thesis

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Abstract: This paper did a Critical Examination and Axiomatization of W. V. O. Quine's Naturalized Epistemology and Continuity Thesis. Quine's naturalized epistemology upholds a notion of continuity between philosophy and science which is contrived through compressing and narrowing down epistemology by and large in terms of objective or subject-matter, scope and method and confining it into psychology. What stands austere in this effort is that Quine did not identify the continuity by specifying what is part and parcel of them that characterize them to be continuous, rather he trades off one of them of its substance and annexes it into the other to stand them aligned and continuous. This study aims at how Quine made traditional epistemology a second fiddle in the knowledge enterprise. Consequently, this work being qualitative research, employs the methods of content analysis and critique. Thus, it is the conviction and contention of this paper that this is a substantive stripping and marginalization of epistemology which is non-modest and unwarranted. Hence, this study therefore urges and tender a more modest continuity thesis and argue that what Quine identifies as their common subject matter and as objective of study is a mistaken assumption or an over-generalization. We conclude that what is even more austere is his recommendation of the abandonment of the goal of a first philosophy to settle with the objectives of science.

Keywords: Traditional Epistemology, Naturalized Epistemology, Marginalization, Substantive Stripping, Continuity Thesis..

Introduction

Historically, traditionalists have predominated the epistemological scene with a leaning towards arriving at the grounds/norms of inquiry and by so assume an approach identifiable as analytic, normative, rational *a priori* methodology with an undying underlying philosophical skepticism to conquer. So, it has always been a perennial epistemic burden to arrive at a precise foundation for knowledge as such, upon which individual knowledge claims are to begin and as well be grounded and also for skepticism to be defeated. The general characteristics of the traditional approach to epistemological theorizing which naturalists react against cannot be overlooked at this point. The whole epistemological enterprise is amidst a shift from traditional epistemology to naturalistic epistemology. The character of twenty-first century epistemology is naturalistic. In 1922, R. W. Sellars (1922) a philosopher proclaimed, "we are all naturalists now" (p. vii). Clark (2014) declares, "at the turn of the twenty-first century naturalism is the reigning orthodox assumption of most faculties in most universities across the English-speaking world. In the discipline of philosophy, philosophers increasingly identify themselves as naturalists" (p. 1).

The epistemological enterprise has been traditionally known so to be autonomous and prior (standing separate, apart and ahead of other disciplines), analytic (dealing with conceptual clarification), normative (setting the norms of inquiry), rational *a priori* in methodology (careful reflection rather than empirical investigation) and in quest to refute skepticism (Rysiew 2014, p. 3; Crumley 2009, p. 185). This approach of traditional epistemology is unavoidably a direct result of the epistemic burden it attempts at solving - to set the epistemic grounds of knowledge/truth. However, the pursuit of knowledge is essential to all disciplines; that is to say, all disciplines are in pursuit of knowledge of the sort or the other. Both philosophy and science have made various commitments. The commitment by various disciplines and especially by the empirical sciences to this pursuit is manifest in production of more knowledge claims (information) about the natural world. The fields of history and anthropology have accounted for the origins of human societies, cultures and civilization; religion has come with apprehension and devotion to a divine being; politics has forwarded the use of power for the orderly organization of human society; economics and accounting give details of the economic behaviour of man and how man makes efficient use of economic resources to meet needs, psychology reveals what happens within our minds and its connections to experience, etc. Science on its part contributes a great deal in discoveries about the natural world and provides support for innovation and seems to be more successful than the other disciplines in terms of having a precise method, progressiveness in scope, discoveries and precision of theories used in prediction. Herein lies the naturalists' attraction and contention.

However, traditional epistemology makes commitment to found all knowledge on a rational condition that is beyond and separate from any given fact of knowledge and emphasizes the role of the mind through logical reasoning and mathematical deduction and intuition as the source, process and foundation of knowledge. By this *a priori* approach, traditional epistemology does not recognize the findings of science as resourceful to epistemological inquiry. Science itself must be mustered through this *a priori* criterion. In all, traditional epistemology lays knowledge on the criterion of certainty of subjective awareness.

In the twenty-first century, a major reaction emerged against traditional epistemology in terms of its approach, goals and objectives. This is naturalism, seeking for a revision of epistemology by way of disconnecting epistemology from the traditional approach, goals and objectives in favour of naturalistic, science-oriented objectives. Naturalists contend against traditional epistemology that it has not been successful in its preoccupation nor being satisfactory in its offers. Naturalism in epistemology, though it does not represent a single unified thesis as there are many renditions of it as there are many proponents, broadly speaking, is the view, movement and insistence that "there should be a close connection between philosophical investigation - here, of such things as knowledge, justification, rationality, etc., and empirical (natural) science" (Rysiew, 2020, p. 1; SEP, 2021, p. 1). Beyond that, proponents of naturalism in epistemology conceive of that close

connection, exactly by advocating for the “use of empirical methods, or insist upon the relevance of the results of certain areas of empirical study, or invoke certain recognized ‘natural’ properties, relations, and soon, in their accounts of certain central epistemic phenomena” (Rysiew, 2020, p. 1; SEP, 2021, p. 1).

The naturalists’ commitment is not concentrated on a single unified point of contention against traditional epistemology, they are varied. The various naturalists are motivated by diverse concerns (Rysiew, 2014, p. 1). Among the various concerns raised are, “TE is ... unduly and unprofitably concerned with skeptical worries” (Dickens, 2016, p. 1-3); “as too much the product of “armchair” (perhaps a priori, and maybe ultimately idiosyncratic) theorizing” (Armstrong, 1968, ; Goldman, 1992, p. 106-126; Papineau, 1993, Kornblith, 2002); “as too geared towards the study of ‘our concepts’ of various states and properties and not concerned enough with the epistemological phenomena themselves” (Goldman, 1994, p. 301-302); as operating without attention to the conditions in which knowledge (for example) is actually produced and/or shared, the limits, contours and history of actual human cognition” ((Pacherie, 2002: p. 306; Papineau, 1993, and Kornblith, 1994b), and so on.

W. V. O. Quine, who is acknowledged as the founder of twenty-first century naturalism, he popularizes ‘Epistemology Naturalized’. His naturalism makes commitment to empiricism in so much that it leaves no reservation for anything *a priori*. Therefore, he dismisses the analytic and synthetic distinction in his *Two Dogmas of Empiricism* and holds to explain all things in terms of nature, as they can be empirically derived as done in science. Quine observed that, “the dominant Cartesian foundationalist approach in traditional philosophical discourse did not assign a role to natural science. The findings of natural science were not considered relevant to philosophical inquiry, vice versa, philosophy was also not construed as useful to natural science” (Jimoh, 2020; p. 116-117). Hence, Quine in ‘Epistemology Naturalized’ the “abandonment of the goal of a first philosophy prior to natural science” (p. 67), which further involves a “readiness to see philosophy as natural science trained upon itself and permitted free use of scientific findings” (p. 85) and finally, recognizes that “...it is within science itself, and not in some prior philosophy, that reality is to be identified and described” (p. 21). He points that the empirical science of psychology reveals the connection between consciousness and objects of consciousness in nature and of how scientific theories are formed about the wide world from basic sensory experience which he calls sensory stimulation. He urges that the pursuit of epistemology should be a study of actual human cognition using the resources (findings) provided in science (especially the science of empirical psychology, cognitive science, and physics). In the long run he proposes that epistemology should be annexed as a chapter of the empirical science of psychology because the latter is more fruitful in its findings towards the pursuit of knowledge and in this way, skepticism can be defeated. In contrast to traditional epistemology that subjugates science to scrutiny, Quine views science to be in a higher position above common sense and the mere reflective activity of epistemology.

Incidentally, there are mixed feelings among philosophers across the divides of traditional epistemology and naturalistic epistemology about keeping commitment with the analytic and normative role, *a priori* rational theorizing approach of traditional epistemology in its quest for foundation and justification of knowledge to silence skepticism, or to make do with those already offered by the traditionalists, or to look further elsewhere, perhaps, into the empirical sciences, that is fast becoming very influential, for appropriate standards and norms of inquiry. Quine in ‘Epistemology Naturalized’ recommends the “abandonment of the goal of a first philosophy prior to natural science and the annexation of epistemology into a chapter of psychology.

The motivation for this work is the growing trend to adapt the findings of science into philosophical analysis and Quine’s naturalism project which is one of such insistence appears to have settled that problem. That is why this present research is set out to critically assess the capacity of Quine’s project to satisfy or carry the burden of traditional epistemology.

A line of distinction can be drawn between contemporary epistemological currents of thought; the insistence on keeping commitment with the analytic and normative role,

apriority rational theorizing approach of traditional epistemology in its quest for foundation and justification of knowledge to silence skepticism on one hand, and the insistence to abandon the analytic normative role with the *a priori* rational theorizing approach and philosophical skepticism to look further into the empirical science of psychology, cognitive science and physics to obtain adequate epistemological resources on the description of the actual process of human cognition. This is naturalism. The naturalistic turn stems from the dissatisfaction with the proceeds of traditional epistemology in relation to the position and offers of science.

The interest in this study is to critically examine and axiomatize the adequacy of Quine's naturalistic epistemology to comprehensively carry the burden of traditional epistemology such as playing the analytic and normative roles, diminishing skepticism and providing the epistemic foundation for the other disciplines such as religion, ethics, politics, economics, history, anthropology, and so on.

An Overview of Traditional Epistemology

Traditionally, in philosophy, normative epistemology refers to those aspects of epistemology that are dominantly concerned with first-order theorizing with regards to such recurring questions and problems as; what is truth? How can we know? How do we ought to form justified belief? etc. Traditional epistemology is majorly concerned with establishing foundation of knowledge, criteria for knowledge, definition of knowledge, setting norms of inquiry, knowledge justification, and the refutation of skepticism. Alvin I. Goldman delineates three conceptions of epistemology on the basis of their aims and functions. They are; Descriptive Epistemology, Analytical Epistemology and Normative Epistemology. He warns that these three conceptions are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive (Goldman, 1985, p. 29). Some of the recurring fundamental questions and problems bedeviling epistemology could be expressed as questions: What is knowledge and its essential features? From where does our knowledge originate (sources)? "How do we know (process or procedure)? What is the extent of our knowledge, is there actually a limit to what we can know? Etc." (Moser & Nat 2003, p. 1).

Traditional epistemology answers to skeptical worries such as: how do we know that what we claim to know is the truth? What are the grounds for believing it to be true? What is the absolute foundation for knowledge? Thus, Plato offered that knowledge is justified true belief (Goldman, 1979, p. 1-23). Descartes in the modern period held that knowledge is to be founded on the criterion of "indubitability which is clear and distinct perception derived from the mind's inner reflection" (*First Meditation* 1988, p. 17). Hinting on the objective motivation of these traditionalists' labours, Akpan (2022) hints that, "contrary to the orientation of skeptics the conviction of the epistemologist is his or her confidence in the existence of atomized units of truth, according to which each proposition is possible. It is a negation of skepticism" (p. 369).

Over the places, we likely come by people raising the question of how someone got to know what he/she claimed to know or how sure a person is in a claimed knowledge. Most times, the question is asked un-seriously, especially among lay-folks. But just the same question was seriously asked with a daring inquisitiveness to challenge virtually all knowledge, whatever anyone had claimed to know. When one says, "I know", how does he know that he knows? How sure is he that he truly knows? How do you know that you know what you know? The question is not "what do you know?" so as to answer with "I know that Judas betrayed Jesus". The question is how do you know in yourself that you know that you know? It seeks an internal subjective rational condition for claiming to know what you know. In the 5th century when the sophists raised the question of knowledge, there were already divergent schools of thought about reality and with no unity of thought among them, leading the sophists to question the foundation of knowledge that would sustainably bear and justify knowledge. The logical end point, where there is no basis for knowledge, is that there is no knowledge, after all. The belief that there is no knowledge is known as skepticism and Georgias the notable proponent. Yet, an offshoot is that, the existing body of knowledge is but mere opinions and beliefs of individuals. This is relativism, also known as subjectivism in a restricted sense. Protagoras was the proponent of this latter assumption.

To this challenge, their contemporary philosophers i.e. Socrates and Plato, and later Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Kant, and others turned attention. They carried out an investigation into the basis of knowledge, a search for subjective internal foundation of knowledge. In this way, the discourse of knowledge - epistemology, began. Epistemology is the critical inquiry and investigation of the nature, sources, conditions and limits of knowledge, especially human knowledge. Their early discourses were on the meaning and definition of knowledge, distinction between knowledge and belief or opinion, knowledge justification, provision of norms of knowledge.

However, another school of thought have criticised the concept of traditional epistemology. The major proponent Jane Duran holds that one of such complaint among women though not without some male sympathizers against what they perceive to be a patriarchally biased or dominated society is what she refers to as androcentric epistemology. In her work, *Towards a Feminist Epistemology*, Duran alleges that hitherto the rise of naturalized epistemology in the 1960s a great deal of what has passed for epistemology since the era of Plato is ideologically androcentric. She holds the overt emphasis on pure and speculative reason devoid of the influence of human passions and physiological functions alongside the conception of women as the 'other being' enslaved to bodily functions and incapable of separating her reason from the body as held by traditional epistemologists as the cause of "a tradition in epistemology that is at once virtually exclusively normative and staggeringly androcentric" (Duran, 1991, p. 8).

Thus, scholars with interest in the subject matter have made attempts to articulate what they mean by a feminist epistemology, that is, a way of knowing peculiar to women. Moreover, while some of these feminist scholars work in epistemology are aimed at exposing the masculinity of different areas of knowledge (Lennon & Whitford, 1994, p. 1), others are concerned with articulating a way of knowing that pertains to women -feminist epistemology. Little wonder in her attempt to show the masculine nature of what passed as epistemology prior to the advent of naturalized epistemology, Duran appears to use the terms: analytic and normative interchangeably. She believes that the normative nature of analytic epistemology manifest itself in the course of our epistemic analysis of these problems of knowledge and the presuppositions we hold about knowledge (Duran, 1991, p. 19). How does epistemology as a branch of philosophy that is concerned with addressing fundamental problems and questions of knowledge and the clarification of what it means to know (Rescher 2003, p. xiii). Kornblith in the beginning of his essay explicitly acknowledges the view predominant in positivist epistemology that epistemological questions should be divorced from psychological questions on grounds that epistemology is traditionally considered a normative discipline. This view Kornblith believes is mistaken and rather supports "a psychological approach to the questions about knowledge and justification" (Kornblith, 1980, p. 597).

Against the backdrop of contemporary literature, this early effort and direction of epistemological inquiry that spun from Socrates to Kant is tagged traditional epistemology or analytic epistemology. The contemporary approach to epistemology is naturalism or naturalistic epistemology which is descriptive, empirical, external, scientific and somewhat psychological. Our work here centers on the renderings of W. V. O. Quine, a foremost naturalist and author of 'Epistemology Naturalized'.

Traditional Epistemology and the Allegation of Androcentrism

The idea of a feminist epistemology, at least, Duran's version, is a product of a reaction to the perceived prevalence of a male-dominated or biased conception of epistemology that does not accord equal or adequate cognizance to the unique feminine features on the discourse in the theory of knowledge. Traditionally, in philosophy, normative epistemology refers to those aspects of epistemology that are dominantly concerned with first-order theorizing with regards to such recurring questions and problems as; what is truth? How can we know? How do we ought to form justified belief? etc. Alvin I. Goldman delineates three conceptions of epistemology on the basis of their aims and functions. They are; Descriptive Epistemology, Analytical Epistemology and Normative Epistemology. He warns that these three conceptions are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive

(Goldman, 1985, p. 29). In her attempt to show the masculine nature of what passed as epistemology prior to the advent of naturalized epistemology, Duran appears to use the terms: analytic and normative interchangeably. She believes that the normative nature of analytic epistemology manifest itself in the course of our epistemic analysis of these problems of knowledge and the presuppositions we hold about knowledge (Duran, 1991, p. 19). In the part one of her work, entitled, *Androcentric Epistemology*, Duran sets out to establish what she terms the “normative and hyperidealized nature of contemporary analytic epistemology” (Duran, 1991, p. 19). In tracing the historical roots of epistemology as a sub-field of philosophy, she contends that epistemology is as old as the Platonic dialogues but the present status or advancement made in epistemology as it is the case today is largely due to the modern era, that is, the post-Cartesian period and partly also due to the twentieth century that have witnessed more narrowly defined epistemological question. An instance of this question is the question of the fourth condition for knowledge. Predominantly utilizing Bertrand Russell’s, *A History of Western Philosophy*, she embarks on a task to establish the problem of the epistemic tradition of philosophy. Referencing Russell on the Cartesian architectural quest for indubitable knowledge and his eventual arrival at *cogito ergo sum*, Duran draws attention to subjectivity of certain knowledge as highlighted by Russell when following the logical expression of Descartes’ *cogito ergo sum*. This she claims have been at the heart of contemporary epistemology.

Duran went on to highlight some of the major epistemological theories and their influence, she begins with Russell’s logical atomism. She is of the view that the work foreshadows a good deal of the history of twentieth-century epistemology and from the works of Descartes and even Russell’s logical atomism she tried to show that there is a “desire to place empirical knowledge on a footing equal to non-empirical or deductively ascertainable knowledge” (Duran, 1991, p. 23). This underlining pattern in epistemology she contends manifest itself in the twentieth-century analytic quest, “and this was ushered in partly by Russell’s attempt to establish a basis of irrefutability for sense-based contentions, beginning with the deployment of logically proper names” (Duran, 1991, p. 23). It is this perspective of Russell that Duran blames for the move among professional epistemologists to give “a tighter and narrower account of knowledge, or claims to knowledge derived through the senses” (Duran, 1991, p. 23). In the subsection, entitled, *Sense-Data Views: Normative Theories of Privileged Access*, she proceeds to argue that the sense-data theorists in an attempt to obtain epistemic certainty subserviently sacrificed most of what would pass for an adequate ontology and in “the process did, indeed, begin to encompass their own destruction” (Duran, 1991, p. 25). In reaction to this atomistic and sense-data view, by J. L. Austin’s objection, Duran points out that this brought about an attempt to tackle the conditions for knowledge from the view point of analytically “tight necessary and sufficient conditions” (Duran, 1991, P. 26), by American philosophers. From the stand point of necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge in approaching the question of knowledge, Duran held that this new standpoint ended up all cases of knowledge, “whether empirically derived or not, on the same footing” (Duran 1991, p. 26). Even the American analytic epistemology is not without its own impediments. In examining Edmund Gettier’s classical reaction to the traditional epistemological conception of knowledge as justified true belief and the panoply of reactions to Gettier’s thesis in the twentieth-century were all purely obsessed with normativity. Neither Gettier in his hypothetical examples nor scholars with their counterexamples responding to his work cared to at least make reference to the human cognitive process of rational agent seeking knowledge. Yet these cognitive dimension of humans play a vital role both in the generation, storage and retrieval of human knowledge.

What sorts of facts about cognitive and neural functioning are relevant? One wants to inquire why it is that elements of memory storage, retrieval from memory, sensory retention of images, capacity for inferring logical structure, and other sorts of cognitive capacities -all relevant to the sorts of examples utilized -are never referred to in the theories of relevant counterexamples? (Duran, 1991, pp. 29-30).

It is her observation and judgement that vast majority of what passes as analytic epistemology is not only hyperidealized and ideologically androcentric but originated in sheer apsychological manner and have held on to this apsychological character from the 1960s and 1970's. This apsychological character of epistemological theory became a cause of concern among epistemologists and forms the needed grounds for "another important move in the theory of knowledge" -naturalized epistemology (Daran, 1991, p. 30).

Duran's allegation of androcentrism as an underlying ideological current underpinning contemporary analytic epistemology majorly springs forth from these her analysis of the theoretical traits of traditional epistemology. Particularly, in the light of an analysis of knowledge in terms of "logically necessary and sufficient conditions, lack of allusion to descriptively adequate models, the importance of counter-examplifying, putative universalizability of conditions and so forth" (Duran, 1991, p. 44). It is in fact these kinds of traits that Duran and other feminist theorists describes and labels androcentric. The structuring of traditional Western epistemology is inherently and purely normative in its approach in theorizing about knowledge without adequate consideration of what humans engage in cognitive activities, in quest for knowledge, actually do go about it. On the contrary, it seems too obsessed with what approach the ideal would-be knower ought to take in arriving at knowledge. This hyperidealized nature of epistemology is not only too stringent an approach to theorizing about knowledge but also narrows the bounds of a holistic approach to epistemology. These aforementioned traits of analytic epistemology are in fact repudiated by Duran hence, her advocacy for a more naturalized theory of knowledge liberated from the shackles of the stringent and hyperidealized normative foundations or analytic epistemology.

Some of the recurring fundamental questions and problems bedeviling epistemology could be expressed as questions: What is knowledge and its essential features? From where does our knowledge originate (sources)? "How do we know (process or procedure)? What is the extent of our knowledge, is there actually a limit to what we can know? Etc." (Moser & Nat 2003, p. 1). In the light of the feminist agitations, we may add, new epistemological questions like: Do our biological or physiological construction influence our quest for knowledge? Is there a way of knowing that is peculiar to both gender?

The Salient Assumptions of Traditional Epistemology

On the salient assumptions of traditional epistemology, summarizing from Crumley (2009) and Rysiew's (2014), respectively:

[First,] 'Much of traditional theorizing about central epistemic notions, such as knowledge, justification, evidence, and so on, has been carried out *a priori*: careful reflection, rather than empirical investigation'; secondly, 'relatedly, is a view of epistemology as autonomous: in terms of both its methods and its subject matter, epistemology is independent of the sciences, prior to the sciences - advances in the former can aid and constrain the latter, but not vice versa'; thirdly, 'again, relatedly - a distinctive feature of traditional epistemology is said to be its concern with normative matters' (Crumley 2009, p. 185 in Rysiew 2014, p. 3).

To Crumley's list, given its historical importance, we might add: "among the central tasks of epistemology as traditionally practiced has been to articulate a plausible response to skepticism - i.e., to defend the ordinary commitment that we have, or are reasonable in taking ourselves to have, a wide range of justified beliefs and/or a decent stock of knowledge" (Rysiew 2014, p. 3).

Many advocates of traditional epistemology presume epistemology as being normative regarding being prescriptive as well - i.e., of telling us how we should form our beliefs etc. "This connects with the idea, popular within traditional epistemology, that epistemology is in the business of offering useful advice, and so as having "an important meliorative dimension" (Kitcher, 1992, p. 64; Wrenn, 2006, p. 60). The point is, beyond the production of claims of knowledge, traditional epistemology is majorly concerned with establishing foundation of knowledge, criteria for knowledge, definition of knowledge, setting norms

of inquiry, knowledge justification, and the refutation of skepticism. The goal of traditional epistemology is to establish the rational subjective internal condition and or foundation of knowledge. It seeks to rest knowledge on a subjective and rational basis -the mind and its rational content.

Method of Traditional Epistemology

As a method, it adopts rationalism - the use of human reason to contemplate rather getting out there to investigate. The method goes along with intuition and logical deduction and analyticity (conceptualization and conceptual clarification). When the mind through the reasoning activity gets an intuition, it grasps it and conceptualizes it, gives it a concept or terminology and attempts to clarify the concept. Of course, this method or manner of philosophical activity is self-reflective and leaves resort to external investigation unnecessary.

By approach, it is speculative, prescriptive or normative: herein, it proffers the norms of inquiry. The effort is to provide criteria for knowledge. Plato advanced that justifiability is sufficient condition for knowledge. Plato defined knowledge as 'justified true belief'. For Descartes, the necessary condition for knowledge is 'indubitability of clear and distinct perception'. This means that, knowledge is manifest in truths that cannot be doubted.

Traditional epistemology refers to the early epistemic discourse that adopts the analytic-normative approach and *a priori* rational methodology to inquire and explain the notion of human knowledge. Its concern is with definition of knowledge, knowledge/belief distinction, justification of human knowledge and refutation of skepticism and it adopts the aforementioned approaches and methodology in its inquiry. Traditional epistemology is so by nature based on the context that sets out its emergence. It rose in response to skepticism. Skepticism sets the pace and challenge of traditional epistemology. Thus, traditional epistemology runs with an undying craving to conquer skepticism in all its manifestations in form of doubts, ignorance, uncertainty, mere beliefs/opinions, lack of evidence, misuse and misunderstanding of language, etc.

Naturalism

Naturalism has two versions. As a philosophical doctrine, "it is the twofold view that (1) everything is composed of natural entities – those studied in the ... natural sciences – whose properties determine all the properties of things, persons included; and (2) acceptable methods of justification and explanation are those commensurable, ... with those in science" (Audi, 1999, p. 517). In existing literature, the first version is referred to as metaphysical naturalism synonymous with ontological naturalism which is the view that only the material world and physical phenomena exist and are governed by physical laws; while the second version is referred to as methodological naturalism which upholds scientific models, instruments, method of experiment, prediction and confirmation as the best way or method of investigating about the natural world.

Martinez (2013) explains that "broadly speaking, naturalism refers to views that consider philosophical method to be continuous with the method of science, implying that at least some scientific methods have an impact on whatever philosophy can say about the norms of inquiry" (p. 1). This submission is not far-fetched from Quine who announces a, "readiness to see philosophy as natural science trained upon itself and permitted free use of scientific findings" (p. 85). Quine's naturalistic account of human knowledge reflects both ontological and methodological versions in a radical way attempting to give a perfect picture and description of the actual process of human cognition. These articulations are at the heart of his 'Epistemology Naturalized'.

Quine's Naturalistic Conception of Epistemology

Naturalized epistemology for Quine is the description of the actual process of human cognition. It's a description of the external and internal conditions and processes through which cognition takes place. It is a scientific conception of philosophical practice by Quine (1969) which recommends the, "abandonment of the goal of a first philosophy prior to

natural science" (p. 67) which further involves a, "readiness to see philosophy as natural science trained upon itself and permitted free use of scientific findings" (p. 85) and lastly, recognizes that "... it is within science itself, and not in some prior philosophy that reality is to be identified and described" (p. 21).

Naturalized epistemology therefore is the description of how human knowledge is derived through the process where experience or stimulus received from the external environment triggers our sensory receptors causing a sort of experience or sensation that is felt and this felt sensation is contrived as a sort of mental awareness and is interpreted by the brain and cognized forming knowledge which is expressed or communicated through the language of thought or words. For Quine, the sort of sensation we get is meager but the linguistic output (the use of words) expressing that knowledge is omnibus - a torrential output. Quine's conviction to set the foundation of knowledge is simply to unravel the knowledge acquisition process itself which would serve as the foundation.

Quine's rendering of the actual cognition process is an interplay of observation, ostension and behaviourism. For Quine, knowledge acquisition is subsumed in language learning. Observation is any phenomenon, experience or scene in nature that is given to the senses. Observation creates sensory stimulation which is the triggering of our nerve endings, sensory surfaces (technically, sensory receptors) creating a kind of sensation/feeling which by means of transmission by neurons to the brain results in mental awareness. Consequently, the brain processes the sensation and gives a response either by behaviour or a verbal utterance which is known as observation sentence. Observation sentence is, "the sentence that reports or predicts a present or imminent observation" (physical event, scene or occurrence). "It is a sentence whose whole occasion of affirmation ... is the ... observable present occasion". (Quine, *WB* 1970, pp. 13-16).

This is revealed in how the human infant - an epistemic beginner - learns to utter words in the sensible presence of something observed. With reinforcement from adults and possible communication, the utterance would be habituated for such and such observations till the child becomes an expert user of the language of observation and thought. With time, the linguistic expressions for even a single observation becomes manifold. This is called ostension. Ostension is a non-derivative approach, "where terms and short sentences containing them are learned in the sensible presence of something that the term describes or in the circumstance that the term reports" (Quine, *WB* 1970, p. 13). This is a typical primitive induction. Ostension is behavioural in outlook. The behaviourism of Quine pertaining to the discourse of human knowledge is an account of the individual's behaviour in making observation sentences by way of assenting or dissenting under the necessary stimulations. Quine finally situates this whole discourse of human cognition in psychology. Going this direction, Quine asks, "why not settle for psychology?" (*EN* 1969, p. 75).

Psychology provides the biological, physiological and mental conditions and processes by which knowledge is acquired or cognition takes place. It expresses how the various organs such as sense organs (sensory receptors) like eye, ear, nose, tongue and the skin get stimulated in their contact with the outer world and transmits such stimulation to the brain via neurons connected to the brain resulting to a sort of mental awareness; and the brain receives, processes, interprets and responds. The response could be expressed by overt or covert behaviour or via speech act using language. This way, human knowledge is derived. Quine believes that this is what summarizes epistemological pursuit and he believes psychology has provided the resources, thus, epistemology should be enclosed as a chapter of psychology to share with science of empirical psychology. He sums it that, "a conspicuous difference between old epistemology and the epistemological enterprise in this new setting is that we can now make free use of empirical psychology" (Quine, *EN* 1969, p. 83).

This very naturalistic conception of epistemology already strips epistemology of its substantive objectives in the subject matter of knowledge which is to ascertain the norms and criteria for knowledge. The next most natural consequence for traditional epistemology which has been stripped of its substance is marginalization - treating epistemology as a minor in the pursuit and discourse of knowledge and especially of its

acquisition process. This is both implicit and explicit in Quine's continuity and containment thesis: "The old epistemology aspired to contain, in a sense, natural science; it would construct it somehow from sense data. Epistemology in its new setting, conversely, is contained natural science, as a chapter of psychology" (Quine, *EN* 1969, pp. 82-83).

Quine's Continuity Thesis

Quine holds that both philosophy and science (the empirical science of psychology) are continuous in terms of their shared subject matter: "Epistemology, or something like it, simply falls into place as a chapter of psychology and hence of natural science. It studies a natural phenomenon, viz., a physical human subject" (Quine, *EN* 1969, P. 82-83). Quine's naturalized conception of epistemology sees epistemology as a descriptive inquiry of the process of human cognition as elicited above. As become a descriptive discourse, it is conceived to share the same approach with science - the descriptive approach rather than the prescriptive as with the normative and analytic. For him, "There is thus, reciprocal containment, though containment in different senses: epistemology in natural science and natural science in epistemology" (Quine, *EN* 1969, p. 83). The subject matter in the discourse of knowledge is the human subject and the legitimate pursuit is to describe not to prescribe the process of human cognition. "This human subject is accorded a certain experimentally controlled input ... and in the fullness of time the subject delivers as output a description of the three-dimensional external world and its history" (Quine, *EN* 1969, p. 82-83) Therefore, epistemology is a scientific enterprise or like it, inquiring into the same subject matter and applying the same descriptive approach, letting go of its prior objectives. Quine's bold statement is:

One effect of seeing epistemology in a psychological setting is that ... awareness ceased to be demanded when we gave up trying to justify our knowledge of the external world by rational reconstruction. What to count as observation now can be settled in terms of the stimulation of the sensory receptors, let consciousness fall where it may (*EN* 1969, p. 70-71).

In this redefined pursuit, according to Quine, epistemology is stripped of its initial concern with analysis of language of thought, normativity and *a priori* rational methodology, to imbibe the concerns of the science which is to describe, explain and predict. In this new setting, science leads, epistemology follows. For the business of description of the actual process of human cognition, Quine recognizes the empirical science of psychology as providing the worthwhile findings and resources for epistemology to share with. Thus, he advocates for the annexation of epistemology into a chapter of psychology.

Quine's Supposed Reasons for Opting to have Epistemology Traded-Off includes that:

Firstly, both epistemology and science (especially, empirical psychology) share a common subject matter: "we are studying how the human subject of our study posits bodies and projects his physics from his data"; "Epistemology, or something like it, simply falls into place as a chapter of psychology and hence, of natural science. It studies a natural phenomenon, viz., a physical human subject" (Quine, *EN* 1969, pp. 82-83). However, thus, assumption of common subject matter is mistaken for the object of epistemology as well.

Secondly, traditional epistemology had run in omission of what should form its legitimate preoccupation namely, the description of the actual process of cognition. This means that Traditional epistemology has not been meaningfully engaged with what should form its legitimate business. The legitimate business of epistemology as an enquiry and discourse and theory of human knowledge, according to Quine, is the description of the actual process of cognition, i.e. of how "we have been able to put such a voluminous theoretic explanation of the world on the basis of very meager sensory input" (...). He implied that Traditional Epistemology has been engaged in a mistaken preoccupation, such as concerns with definition of knowledge, belief and knowledge justification.

Finally, traditional epistemology has not been successful and satisfactory in its deliverances on the inquiry into the subject matter of human knowledge. Having begun

with the impression that Traditional epistemology had assumed a mistaken preoccupation, the results would not be given good and valuable consideration or credits. He charges that traditional epistemology upholds the notion of infallibility as a criterion for knowledge. Infallibility is the assumption that what must count as knowledge is a claim or truth that must not fail at any time. This is typical of a static view of knowledge and truth. But in contemporary renderings, a process view of knowledge and truth holds sway together with the assumption that the natural world is subject to perpetual flux; as such, claims per time about the natural world are subject to change at the behest of a noticed recalcitrance in the natural world. So, the insistence of traditional epistemologists on certainty and infallibility being connected to a static notion of knowledge and truth is deemed unsatisfactory.

Another dissatisfaction is the inability of epistemologists to express or reduce their renderings into observational terms and logico-mathematical terms. Quine remarks, "philosophers have rightly despaired of translating everything into observational and logic-mathematical terms... And some philosophers have seen in this irreducibility the bankruptcy of epistemology" (1969, p. 76). He dislodged epistemology in its inability to advance an empirical adequate observational language to describe the natural world. Thus, traditional epistemology fails to meet expectations of advancing an empirically adequate language.

Quine also wrestles with the claim of priority in traditional epistemology. Epistemology is to set the foundation of knowledge for all disciplines including the sciences. Therefore, it is the prior and first science of all sciences. For Quine, epistemology has not laid this foundation well enough to claim priority in that it did not lay the foundation on the actual process of human cognition. In the annexed and refined status of epistemology, for Quine, science leads, by providing the actual cognition process, while epistemology follows the resources of the sciences.

Critical Evaluation

W.V.O. Quine advanced what is commonly known as epistemology naturalized wherein, he equally maintained that both philosophy or epistemology and science are continuous but in the significant sense of having epistemology abandon its prior objective getting it annexed into a chapter of psychology (in science) so to stand aligned and thereby becoming continuous. His conception of continuity between philosophy and science is by way of having one, epistemology, abandon its subject matter, objective, scope and method or approach to get merged into the other, namely, the empirical science of psychology. He did not specify this continuity in terms of what is part and parcel of them all that characterize them to be continuous but he had to plot the continuity by recommending that one, epistemology, should abandon its ownness of a peculiar subject matter and objective of study, and method, and get merged into the other, namely the empirical science of psychology, so as to become aligned and continuous. This continuity thesis from our differing point lacks modesty and amounts to substantive stripping and marginalization of epistemology. The reasons for recommending the abandonment of the goal or objective of a first philosophy or epistemology is based on a mistaken assumption of the subject matter for the object of epistemology.

Mistaken Assumption of Subject-Matter for Object of Study: W. V. O. Quine claims and or asserts that both philosophy or epistemology, strictly, and science share the same subject matter and this subject matter is identified as the human being. "Both philosophy and science are concerned with a human subject" (Quine, 1969). But this assumption of subject matter is mistaken for the object of epistemology. For Quine, as the subject matter has become the human subject, epistemology need not any further inquiry into rational norms for knowledge but all we need do is to investigate this human subject on the process of his actual knowledge acquisition. The study of the actual cognitive process in man is called cognitive psychology or cognitive science. Indeed, this is not epistemology. It is cognitive science and its goal is to describe the actual cognitive process not to recommend an

approach for knowledge acquisition. But this is not an exact account of the object of epistemology.

Our overview above makes clear that upon the inception of epistemology, it takes on as its object, the formulation of the rational, subjective foundation of knowledge and norms for the acquisition of knowledge and the triumph of skepticism. This object has been identified by Godwin Etorobong Akpan, also as, “to avail the norms of inquiry” (Akpan, 2020, p. 81). As Akpan buttresses, different disciplines take different sides of the same subject matter, pursue different goals. The goal of epistemology is to establish norms of inquiry and not merely describe the process of cognition. The goal is to provide those rational conditions in knowers that make their claims about the natural world count as knowledge. To shift from this goal is a distortion of objective which Quine faults in. By this, Quine himself is in the business of recommending a subject matter for epistemology.

Conclusion

The substantive stripping and marginalization in Quine's naturalized epistemology are that in the way Quine conceived of what the business of epistemology should be, there is a reformulation, delimitation and narrowing of focus and boundaries outside of what formed the original scope and objectives of traditional epistemology by forcing out, literally stripping it of, what constitutes its substance. He failed to contrive the continuity by specifying what is part and parcel of them that characterize them as continuous. Substantive stripping in Quine's naturalism is done on traditional epistemology by way of discrediting and forcing out the original substance (the pursuit to set norms of knowledge, pursuit towards refutation of skepticism; the analytic-normative approach, and *a priori* rational methodology) of traditional epistemology and introducing a new set of concerns from the confines of another discipline, the empirical science of psychology as a replacement. This also amounts to marginalization. At best, he mistook commonality of subject matter (human subject) as the object of epistemology as well. In this mistaken assumption, he saw them continuous and as containing one another. But seeing philosophy as contained within science is a non-modest continuity thesis. A modest continuity thesis is where science is seen as contained within epistemology in empiricism, while epistemology, broadly, is encompassing, in the aspects of rationalism.

In effect, the problem identified in this work is that the proponents of naturalism - W.V.O. Quine did not present any critical framework that could be used to ascertain the capacity of naturalism to completely carry the burden of traditional epistemology. In addition to its lack of a critical framework, Quine's naturalized epistemology lacks the capacity to comprehensively carry the epistemic burden of traditional epistemology. It is this lack of a critical framework and incapacity that this work axiomatizes.

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