

UNDERSTANDING PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS USING NIGERIAN DEMOCRACY AS A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

There are many methods of inquiry used in philosophy but analysis is the most dreaded and most vital among them. Many see it is a thorny academic exercise to do. Many who adopt the method in their researches often end up applying phenomenology or hermeneutics. This work therefore paper aims at explaining what analysis is and how to apply it in philosophical inquiry, using Nigerian democracy as an example. Philosophical analysis is hereby defined as a method whereby a concept is broken to its constituent parts in order to understand it better, criticise or reinterpret. Using Nigerian democracy as example, the author breaks down the concept of democracy to its basic features. Relating them to Nigerian government, the researcher finds out that those essential features are lacking in Nigeria. The conclusion is that Nigeria does not practise democracy. With these discussions on the meaning, nature and application of philosophical analysis, the paper serves as a guide to philosophers on how to apply the method effectively in their researches. It is of great value too to those in humanities and social sciences.

KEYWORDS

Analysis, Philosophy, Method, Democracy, Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

There are many methods of philosophical inquiry. Common among them include dialectic method (Socratic method), phenomenology, speculation, hermeneutics, but the most vital one is philosophical analysis. Analysis in philosophy is not the same with analysis in science where data is examined. Analysis in philosophy has to do with concept, proposition, argument or theory. It is one of the basic tools that distinguish philosophy from other courses in such a way that without it a philosopher may not be successful in his research. Criticism, comparative analysis, logical analysis, conceptual analysis, argumentation and many philosophical exercises revolve round this method of analysis. Though, very important method, many find it difficult to understand and apply. It is on this note that we undertake to study the method, using Nigerian democracy as an illustration. We shall begin with the meaning, types and then how to apply it.

1.1. Meaning and Nature of Philosophical Analysis

Analysis ‘*analusis*’ in Greek or ‘*Analyse*’ in German’ literally means, breaking something down into its primary constituents or components. In Latin, ‘*resolutio*’ was used to render the Greek word ‘*analusis*’, and although ‘resolution’ features a different range of meanings, it is often used synonymously with ‘analysis’. In Aristotelian syllogistic theory, and particularly from the time of Descartes, forms of analysis have also involved ‘reduction’; and in early analytic philosophy it

was 'reduction' that was seen as the aim of philosophical analysis. *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, for example, defines 'analysis' as the "resolution into simpler elements by analysing (opp. *synthesis*)", the only other uses mentioned being the mathematical and the psychological. And in the *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 'analysis' is defined as "the process of breaking a concept down into more simple parts, so that its logical structure is displayed". The restriction to concepts and regard to displaying 'logical structure' are essential qualifications, but the core conception is still that of breaking idea down to its simpler form.

This conception could also be called the **decompositional** conception of analysis. But it is not the sole conception, and indeed is arguably neither the dominant conception in the pre-modern period nor the conception that is characteristic of at least one major strand in 'analytic' philosophy. In ancient Greek thought, 'analysis' referred primarily to the method of working back to first principles by means of which something could then be demonstrated. This conception could also referred to as the **regressive** conception of analysis. In the work of Frege and Russell, on the other hand, before the method of decomposition could happen, the statements to be analysed had first to be translated into their 'correct' logical form. This means that analysis also involves a **transformative or interpretive** dimension. This too, however, has its roots in earlier thought (Ancient Greek Geometry and Medieval Philosophy).

These three conceptions ought not to be seen as competing. In real practices of analysis, which are invariably richer than the accounts that are offered of them, all three conceptions are typically reflected, though to differing degrees and in differing forms. To analyse something, we may first need to interpret it in some way, translating an initial statement, say, into the privileged language of logic, mathematics or science, before articulating the relevant elements and structures, and all in the service of identifying primary principles by means of which to explain it. The complexities that this schematic description suggests can only be appreciated by considering particular types of analysis.

From our study on the meaning and nature of analysis, we can therefore define philosophical analysis as a way utilized in philosophical research which involves a process of breaking down of a thought to its constituent or primary parts to check the meaning or the veracity of its claim. It is also a philosophical method of isolating or working back to what is more primary by means of which something, initially taken as given is often explained or reconstructed. The explanation or reconstruction is often then exhibited during a corresponding process of synthesis. This allows great variation in specific method, however. The aim could also be to get back to basics, but there could also other ways of doing this, each of which could also be called 'analysis'. To 'analyze' as we have studied implies to separate into constituent components or elements, i.e., to work out the essential features that portray the phenomena or concepts in question. Philosophical analysis as a process of inquiry is then a critical and reductive process. Reductive in the sense that it reduces phenomena or concepts or belief to their most elementary components and very difficult in the sense that the method is rigorous, systematic and rational. Critical also means that analysis tries, in some sense, to discover the truth about the phenomena or concept or the belief in question. The principal focus in philosophical analysis is on ideas and concepts.

1.2. Two Major Tools in Philosophical Analysis

Since good philosophical analysis depends upon the abilities to offer precise definitions to concepts and to formulate, isolate and criticize logical arguments, the principal analytic tools in philosophical investigations are:

1. **Conceptual analysis:** This process allows one to give, or to determine, a precise definition of any particular concept.
2. **Logical analysis:** This is a set of rule and procedure that enables one to formulate and assess any rational argument.

Though we have other forms of analysis in philosophy such as critical analysis, descriptive analysis, comparative analysis, but they are more often application of any or both conceptual and logical analyse to criticize, compare or describe. The main purpose of this section of this article is to define and discuss the nature of conceptual and logical analyses.

2. CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Conceptual analysis means the process by which a concept is broken down or analyzed to their constituent parts so that one can gain knowledge or have a better understanding of any particular philosophical issue in which the concept is used (Beaney 2003). For instance, the problem of free will in philosophy encompasses various essential concepts, including the concepts of freedom, determinism, moral responsibility, rationality, ability, etc. The conceptual method of analysis tends to approach such a problem by breaking down the key concepts concerning the problem and seeing how they interact. Thus, in perennial debate on compatibility of free will with the doctrine of determinism, many philosophers have proposed analyses of the relevant concepts to argue for either compatibilism or incompatibilism.

One of the most famous authors of conceptual analysis at its best is Bertrand Russell (1919, 1905) in his theory of descriptions. Russell tried to analyze propositions that involved *definite descriptions* (such as "The tallest spy"), which differentiate unique individual, and *indefinite descriptions* (such as "a spy"), which differentiate a set of individuals. Let us take Russell's analysis of definite descriptions as an example. Superficially, definite descriptions have the ideal subject-predicate form of a proposition. For example, "The present king of France is bald", here "baldness" seems to be the predicate of the subject "the present king of France". However, Russell noted that this is problematic, because France has no present king (It is no longer a monarchy). Normally, to decide whether a proposition of the standard subject-predicate form is true or false, one checks whether the subject is in the extension of the predicate. The proposition is then true if and only if the subject is implied in the extension of the predicate. The problem is that there is no present king of France, so the present king of France cannot be on the list of bald things or non-bald things. Therefore, the proposition expressed by "The present king of France is bald" appears to be neither true nor false.

Nevertheless, analyzing the relevant concepts and propositions, Russell proposed that what definite descriptions really express are not a form of the subject-predicate proposition, but rather they express existentially quantified propositions. Thus, according to Russell's descriptive theory "The present king of France" is analyzed as "There exists an individual who is presently the king of France, there is only one such person, and that person is bald." Now one can identify the truth value of the proposition. Obviously, this is false, because it is not the case that there exists a unique person who is presently the king of France and is bald—since France has no king presently (Bertolet 1999).

3. LOGICAL ANALYSIS

Logic is the instrumentality or rules for systematic reasoning. It means the rules and procedures that must be followed in making a rational argument. Logical analysis therefore assess how the rules and procedures are followed in order to know whether the argument is rational or not; a rational argument is both valid and sound. How do we know a valid and sound argument? This question will lead us to study logical argument, valid and invalid argument and then sound and unsound argument. But this study must begin with sentence and its role in logic.

A sentence: This is a linguistic structure that follows the grammatical rules in a particular language. Consider the linguistic structures:

1. *The black cat caught the mouse.*
2. *The cat black mouse the caught.*

In both instances one can comprehend the individual words within the structures, however, in contrast to (2) which is ungrammatical and therefore nonsense, (1) symbolizes a grammatical English linguistic structure, i.e., a sentence. What differentiates (1) from (2) is that (1) follows grammatical rules and the individual words in it make sense. Philosophers use the terms 'statement' or 'proposition' in indicating what a sentence *expresses* or *means*. Since a statement or proposition makes an assertion (e.g., the sentence '*The black cat caught the mouse*,' asserts that there is a black cat that caught a mouse) it is either true or false. In contrast to this, a sentence is *never* true or false, but rather is either grammatical or not grammatical.

It is good to note that not all sentences are propositions, i.e., statements that are either true or false. Thus, while real questions ('*Is Superman real?*') and commands ('*Let the cat in!*') still communicate information, they are neither true nor false. The distinction between sentences and propositions is the realization that sentences in separate languages (or even separate sentences in the same language) can express the *same* proposition. Thus, without the distinction, translation between languages and synonymous expressions within languages become infeasible.

Logical Argument: Argument comprises one or more propositions (the *premises*), that claim to demonstrate or prove another proposition (the *conclusion*). Consider the sentences:

1. *All men are mortal.*
2. *John is a man.*
3. *Thus, John is mortal.*

In this illustration, all these propositions combined to form an argument; neither sentence (1), (2) nor (3) *alone* represents an argument. An argument is formed when the propositions that sentences (1) and (2) express are taken as premises that purport to prove or demonstrate a conclusion - the proposition that sentence (3) expresses. The premises are therefore the reasons to believe that the conclusion is true. As such the premises can be either:

1. Assumptions (that the argument never proves).
2. Definitions.
3. Factual statements or observations.

In contrast to the premises, which an argument either assumes or states, the conclusion is the only proposition that the argument claims to *prove*. An important clue that a particular sentence

represents a conclusion are such words and phrases as, 'entails', 'because', 'implies' 'therefore', 'thus', 'hence', 'so', 'since', 'suggests', 'is inferable', 'on this account', 'as a consequence', 'as a result', 'it follows that', 'is deducible', and so on. Arguments come in various sizes, i.e., in principle, there is no limit on an argument's length. Some compound arguments can contain one or more intermediate conclusions before the main or final conclusion is arrived at. In many cases, these intermediate conclusions serve as premises in the other arguments that, in the end, are meant to support the final conclusion.

It is sometimes not easy to isolate arguments (or even determine whether an argument exists or not). Nonetheless, there are certain cases where it is clear that no logical argument is being made. In particular, it is important to differentiate between logical arguments and *causal statements*, such as: 'Due to storm, the airplane lost altitude. The claim of this statement is that there is a causal connection between certain events or phenomena, i.e., that the first event (the storm) causes the second event (the airplane's loss in altitude). This is a causal statement and not a logical statement. In contrast, what an argument attempts to demonstrate is that because certain statements are true then it is feasible to conclude that any statement that flows from them is also true. This connection between the premises and their conclusion in an argument is called *logical entailment*, i.e., the premises in an argument entail the conclusion. The relationship which the argument tends to establish then is *logical*, rather than *causal*. The problem is that at times causal statements and arguments use the same language, and it is possible that an argument may include causal statements as premises (or perhaps even as a conclusion). Nevertheless, the point we want to make is that causal statements, on their own, cannot constitute a logical argument. Since it is clear (or should be) that some arguments are better or worse than other arguments, there is need for some means to evaluate logical arguments. To assess arguments, logicians use the concepts such as 'valid', 'invalid', 'sound' and 'unsound'.

Valid and Invalid Arguments: The concepts 'valid' and 'invalid' have to do with an argument's *formal structure*, rather than the substantive claims of the argument. 'Formal structure' means the logical relationship between the premises and their conclusion. An argument can be valid, yet the conclusion is false. It is valid because the conclusion flows from the premises. But if the conclusion does not flow from the premises, it is invalid, even when such conclusion is true. Example of valid argument is

1. All As are Bs.
2. All Bs are Cs.
3. Thus, all As are Cs.

So far as (1) and (2) are true, it is obvious that (3) must also be true and, most importantly, this is the case no matter what A, B and C are. Thus, this represents a valid argument structure. On the contrary, an argument is *invalid* when the conclusion does not flow from the premises. The premises can be true and the conclusion can still be false, i.e., the premises' truth fails to establish the conclusion's truth.

Again, it is essential to realize that in logical arguments, the relation between the premises and conclusion is more than one in which the premises 'suggest' or 'recommend' the conclusion. There is an important *logical* relation between the propositions, such that the premises' truth brings about the conclusion's truth. The relationship is open to neither interpretation nor personal opinion - the argument is either valid or invalid and it is the argument's formal structure that determines this.

Sound and Unsound Arguments: The concepts 'sound' and 'unsound' have to do with the argument's substantive claims, i.e., whether the propositions that made up the argument's premises are *true* or *false*. A logical argument is said to be a *sound* argument when both the argument is valid and the premises are true. It is important to note that for an argument to be sound, it must meet both criteria; it must be true, it must be valid. Consider again this argument:

1. *All men are mortal.*
2. *John is a man.*
3. *Thus, John is mortal.*

This argument is valid, i.e., on the assumption that (1) and (2) are true, (3) must also be true, because it flows from them logically. In order to be sound, it must be the case that (1) and (2) are true. That all men are mortal is more-or-less a truism, though it has never been proven. That John is a man is determinable through historical evidence. Thus, the argument is both valid and sound. An argument is *unsound* when an argument does not meet either condition (1) or (2), i.e., when either that the argument is invalid or that the argument is valid but the premises are false.

Note that while all the premises must be true in order to have a sound argument, it is important to note that once it has one false premise, the entire argument becomes unsound. In the argument above, e.g., were it the case that John was a computer, or a hippopotamus, then the argument would be unsound, since (2) would be false.

Argument Evaluation: To evaluate a logical argument then it is important to find out whether the argument is valid, i.e., on the assumption the premises are true and the conclusion must also be true, and then whether the premises are indeed true. This determination has three possible results:

1. The argument is valid and sound.
2. The argument is valid and unsound.
3. The argument is invalid.

It is important to know that the need to be able to evaluate arguments is more than an intellectual or academic exercise. In order to appreciate the need to be able to evaluate arguments, one must know the aim that logical arguments serve? One clear objective is to find out what is true and false, and thus to expand our knowledge. There is also a sometimes more subtle purpose and that is to, through the logical demonstration that some position is true, convince others to adopt that position. What the concepts 'valid' and 'sound' represent then are the rational (and quite impressive) means to highlight the requirements an argument must have in order for us to accept its conclusions. In the final analysis, the point is that a valid and sound argument compels one to accept the conclusion; there is no rational choice in the matter. This is a convincing argument.

3.1. Application of the Method Using Nigerian Democracy as a Case Study

How can a researcher apply philosophical analysis in studying a concept like democracy? If a researcher wants to study the reality of democracy in Nigeria, how can he apply this method? Remember that we explained in the beginning of this paper that analysis deals with breaking down of concept into its constituents parts. In other words, what are the 'constituents' of democracy? Are those constituents available in Nigeria system of government to qualify it as democratic government?

Democracy as we known is simply defined as government of the people by the people and for the people. The researcher will then study the etymological meaning of democracy, various definitions and many works related to democracy with view of finding out the basic features or components of democracy. He will dig deeper into and ponder seriously on the concept to finding out the basic features or basic 'things' that combined to form democracy. This is because analysis deals with attempt at finding the constituents parts or the basic features. At the end, he is likely to come up with following basic features:

1. Free and fair election: This means that the election must be free and fair. There shall be no undue interference by military, INEC officials and incumbent government. There shall be no rigging. The result must reflect truly the mind of the electorates.
2. Separation of power between the three arms of government: Executive, legislature and judiciary. There shall be checks and balances in such a way that each arm acts as watch dog to ensure that none abuse its power.
3. Independent Judiciary: The judiciary shall be free from legislative and executive influences and pressure in order to be discharging justice properly.
4. Fundamental Human Rights: Freedom of speech, freedom of association, right to life, right to fair hearing, right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, right to own property etc.

There are in fact other features but these are indispensable for the existence of real democratic government, and without them, democracy would just be a mere nomenclature. Having brought out the main features of democracy, the constituents of democracy, the researcher is now done with the analysis of the concept "Democracy". Remember that his aim is to find out whether there is democracy in Nigeria or not. To achieve this aim, the researcher have to assess Nigeria system of government to know whether it possesses these constituents or not. If it does, he can then conclude that Nigeria is practicing democracy, otherwise, there is no democracy in Nigeria.

Is there really democracy in Nigeria? In other words, does Nigeria government possess these aforementioned essential qualities of democracy? I do not think. Various elections held recently were not free and fair as government used military to force electorates to vote for a particular party against others. There were cases of maltreatment against voters who dare refuse their orders. Some electoral officers were kidnapped till they succumb to the pressure from some political moguls (Suye, 2019; Auwal, 2015).

Moreover, for democracy to be real, there must be a separation of powers between the three arms of government. The question now is: Is there truly a separation of power between the three arms of government in Nigeria? In the first place, the legislature is dominated by the members of the ruling party, making them to be protecting their party interests against the good of the nation. They always support the executive even when such support should be by boycott. The issue of money bag from the executive arm and imposition of officials on them emasculate them to be ineffective. Those who dare to stand their grounds against the wills of the executive are threatened with government agencies like Economic Fraud and Financial Commission (EFCC). If they survive it, they would be schemed out of the system during election using the so-called Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). All these weaken the powers of the legislature.

The Nigerian Judiciary is also not free. The Chief Justice of the Federation is appointed by the President of Nigeria with the approval of the legislature. But in case of Nigeria where the presidency manipulates the legislature, such approval is always affirmative. It is just to fulfil all

righteousness. If any Chief Judge refuses to dance to the music of the presidency, he may be removed maliciously. The recent one is the removal of Justice Walter Onoghen. He was dismissed because the ruling party perceived that he may not align with their agenda. Various allegations were raised against him and he was removed immediately without investigations and due process. Justice Ibrahim Tanko Mohammed, an Islamic scholar was used to replace him. It was later found that those allegations were not true, yet he was not called back (BBC, 2019; Effiong, 2019).

In addition, the principle of equality before the law is an illusion in Nigeria. Laws in Nigeria is made for the poor and for the regions other than the northern. Due to high level of corruption, justice is bought in Nigeria. The rich and politicians always get through their cases because they can bribe the police and the court. Similarly, northerners, especially Fulanis among them, would commit heinous crime against the nation and go away with. It is obvious nepotism for federal government to command shoot at site on unarmed Igbo youths protesting for a Republic of Biafra but the Northerners who are Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen, would be arrested, treated like king in the name of rehabilitation and later released, despite lots of atrocities they commit ranging from bombing, killing, raping, kidnapping etc. Is this a fair treatment? No wonder Thrasymachus described justice as interest of those in power (Stumpf, 1994:34).

When one puts all these things together, one can say emphatically that there is no democracy in Nigeria. Democracy exists in Nigerian constitution but not in practice. The problem with Nigeria is that there is a lot of loopholes in their constitution to make any malicious executive so powerful than other arm of government. Secondly, corruption has eaten deep the very fabric of the country that abnormalities are now contained. Whatever government presently in practice in Nigeria is not worthy to be referred to as democracy but despotism.

5. CONCLUSION

We have seen in this paper that analysis means breaking concept or theory into its constituent parts. We have various types of analysis but the two major ones are conceptual and logical analyses. We have equally shown our readers how to apply the method using Nigerian democracy as a case study. We broke democracy to its constituent features and related them to Nigeria society. We found out that those features are practically missing in Nigerian government. We therefore concluded that democracy is an illusion in Nigeria. We followed the rules of logic properly in this inquiry that anybody who does a logical analysis of what we have done can agree with us. We therefore believe that through this study, our readers have learnt what philosophical analysis is and how to apply it in research and academic inquiry. With this method of inquiry, qualitative researches will be more objective and reliable as in quantitative researches.

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