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THE NIGERIAN JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY
Vol. 22, No.2, 2006

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RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, SCIENCE AND EXPLANATION

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ABSTRACT

Ludwig Wittgenstein, while still working on the second part of *Philosophical Investigations,* told his friend M. O'C Drury: "I am not a religious man but I cannot help seeing things from a religious point of view."[1] My purpose in this paper is to enquire into the question as to what constitutes *religious point of view*, compare and contrast it from what is commonly called *scientific standpoint* or *scientific temper*. In the process I argue for the position that there is not just one or any unique paradigm of explanation, but that there are varieties of explanation – each one of them as good and efficacious as the other, if not better. The context, the subject matter, individually or collectively, determines which is the most appropriate model of explanation, and at what point it has to come to an end. In other words, at what point 'saying' is to be replaced by 'showing' would be determined by the context of discourse.

II

It is almost impossible to define what a religious point of view is. First, because though each one of us is naturally and spontaneously a religious being, most of us are not clear about what a religious experience is. Consequently, many of us disclaim having any religious experience. Secondly, there is an immense

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[1] Rush Rhees, ed., *Ludwig Wittgenstein, Personal Recollections* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 94.

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variety of religions. They range from Animism and Totemic to Buddhism, Confucianism, Jainism, diverse forms of monotheism

Christianity, Islam and Judaism — and various types of polytheism, and the enigmatic Hinduism. Each one of them represents a specific form of life.

Gandhi talking about the multiplicity of religions goes to the extent of saying, "In reality, there are as many religions as there are individuals."[2] Religious beliefs – for example, that there is a Supreme Being, a universal Creator, an incarnate omniscient, omnipresent and an all powerful God, a Redeemer, a dispenser of justice, etc. – vary from one religion to the other. However, one common feature shared by all religious beliefs and the experiences discussed in each religion is that they "do not involve weighing of evidences or reasoning to a conclusion. What they do involve is seeing how the belief regulates a person's life" and "such beliefs are not testable hypotheses but absolutes for the believers." These beliefs are not also based on authority. The acceptance of beliefs on authority or the ground that 'an organized body of priests tells him to believe' or because it is 'written in certain books' or because 'his people like him to believe' is termed by Vivekananda as 'not-thinking-carelessness'[3]. The certainty of religious beliefs does not emerge from intellectual speculation. It is the product of our *emotional attachment* to the religion we follow. Like many other beliefs, religious beliefs too, are matters of heart and soul, love, trust and faith.

Therefore, religious beliefs are indifferent to the facticity of the narratives contained in the scriptures. They are neutral to the historicity of the persons, events and places which are mentioned in the religious texts. In this regard, what Wittgenstein says about Christianity is true of all religions. 'Christianity', he says

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[2] *Hind Swaraja*, pp. 35.
[3] Willgenstein, *Complete Works*, Vol. I, 11th Ed., p.367. (hereafter CW)

is not based on a historical truth, rather, it gives us a (historical) narrative and says now believe! But not, believe this narrative with the belief appropriate to a historical narrative — rather believe through thick and thin, and you can do that only as the result of a life. Here you have a narrative — don't take the same attitude to it as to another historical narrative! Give it an entirely different place in your life. — There is nothing paradoxical in that! (CW, p. 37).

There is nothing paradoxical about a religious narrative because religions are not doctrines as they are "not a theory about what has happened and will happen with the human soul, but a description of an actual occurrence in human life." The actual events or occurrences towards which Wittgenstein is drawing our attention are 'consciousness of sin', anguish, despair, and finally salvation through faith. (cf CW p. 32)

Mahatma Gandhi too takes a similar view towards Hinduism. He says, "My Krishna has nothing to do with historical person. . . I believe in Krishna of my imagination as a perfect incarnation, spotless in every sense of the word... *is a profoundly religious book*, largely allegorical, in no way meant to be a historical record."[4] Reasserting his *ahistorical* view he goes on to say that the characters Rama and Krishna "are the creations of man's imagination. Whether they actually lived or not does not affect the picture of them in men's minds."[5] Nor does it affect their faith.

Wittgenstein argued that just as in language "our talk gets its sense from the rest of our actions," the criterion of finding out whether a religious belief is genuinely held to be true or not by an individual is not its historicity, but whether one lives by them. That is why Wittgenstein asserts, "in ethical and religious language we seem constantly (to be) using similes" and the moment we try to explain the meaning of the similes so used, or what stands behind them in terms of discursive language, "we find that there are no such facts."[6] The similes and symbols used

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4   Young India, 1.10.1925, p. 336.
5   Harijan, 22.6.1947, p. 200.
6   "Lecture on Ethics", *Philosophical Review*, January, 1965, pp. 10.

in religions are a kind of a gesture. They, like greetings and other manners of showing respect, are not founded on beliefs, opinions or propositions. When we greet someone, for example, by bowing and saying 'Good Morning' or 'Namaste' we do not base our greeting on our opinion or our learning and knowledge, rather these, given the cultural surroundings, are meant to convey our regard to the other. That is why, except either sarcastically or jocularly in response to such a wish, we do not ever say 'is it good morning?' or 'it is true that good morning!' *They are pure accepted gestures.* They are *expressions of a convention*, a practice in a given form of life and are in no way based on our opinion, conjecture, fact, or theory. If they are not based on our opinion then neither the adjective 'true' nor 'false' is applicable to them. Consequently, they cannot be said to be either true or false.

Likewise, the similes used in the narratives (in religion) in general, and religious language in particular, "gesticulates with words, as it were, because it wants to say something and does not know how to express it" (CW, p. 97). That is why the question about their truth or falsity does not arise at all. In fact the language and similes used in religion are not really important, nor are the thoughts accompanying these utterances significant, what is vital and of great consequence is "the difference that they make at different points in your life" (CW, p.97). Wittgenstein told his friend Drury, "if you and I are to live religious lives, it mustn't be that we talk a lot about religion, but that our manner of life is different" (R, p.129). What he meant by this was not that all talk about religious practices are unimportant, because methods of worship have no place in religious life, rather what he meant was that all such talk is nonsense if there is no amending one's ways and doings, or one's behaviour, in short one's mindset. It is our practice which determines whether we are religious or not.

Wittgenstein added, "it is my belief that only if you try to be helpful to other people will you in the end find your way to God" (R, p. 129). In upholding this view it seems that Wittgenstein was only expounding Christ's reproach in *Luke* 6:46 "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord', and not do what I tell you"; or in *Matthew* 7:21 – 3. "Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord', shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven"; or what Jeremiah says in *Jeremiah* 7:3 – 7, "if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, then I will let you dwell in this place."

The demands of religion are "change your *life*. (Or the *direction* of your life.)" (CW p.61). That is why "Religion says: *Do this! – Think like that!* but it cannot justify this." In fact the moment religion attempts to give an explanation of what it commands one to do, it "become(s) repugnant; since for every reason it gives, there is cogent counter reason" (CV, p.34). It becomes a *philosophy*, a theory. The similes used in religion, therefore, are not meant to be taken literally; rather they are the descriptions of a way or form of life, an attitude to living and the way of behaving. Gandhi too upholds that the metaphors used in religion are only incidental. They are used to fulfill our psychological need as it is our nature to "hanker after symbolism."[7]

Since these similes are descriptions of *a* form of life, *an* attitude, *a* way of behaving, etc., they are cultural and contextual. They are not universal, nor do they fit universally. They, according to Wittgenstein, are the beliefs about which "Nothing in the world will convince me of the opposite! For me this fact is at the bottom

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[7]   Young India, 6.10.1921.

of knowledge. I shall give up other things but not this" (OC, 380). The firmness with which one holds these beliefs, and the steadfastness with which one adheres to them is demonstrated by "one's amending one's ways", "turning one's life around", adopting a new form of life, living life in a new mould altogether. The strength with which one clings to one's religious beliefs is measured by how much and what he is prepared to risk for them and the extent to which these beliefs govern his life. His attitude towards life and his perception of the problems of life change radically. He comes to the conclusion that "the problems of life are insoluble on the surface, and can be solved in depth. In surface dimensions they are insoluble" (CW, p. 84). He states: "taking a certain matter seriously, but then, *at a certain point* not taking it seriously after all, and declaring that something else is still more serious" (CW. p. 97). He realises "what is eternal and important is often hidden from a man by an impenetrable veil. He knows: there's something under there, but he cannot *see* it; the veil reflects the daylight" (CW. p. 92). He comes to recognize the inadequacy, the incompleteness of his knowledge. He realises that there is much more to be known than merely discursive knowledge, that there are sources of knowledge other than the sensory. These means of knowledge are intuitive.[8] Intuition or intuitive knowledge does not contradict reason or the discursive knowledge, it only complements it.

About such a person "we could say that [he] is fulfilling the purpose of existence [and he] no longer needs to have any purpose except to live. That is to say, [he] is content" (NB, p.73). He is a *jivanmukta*, a *purakâma*. He recognizes that "the solution of the problem you see in life is a way of living which makes what is problematic disappear" (CW, p. 31). So, he changes his lifestyle and outlook. For him "the solution of the problem of

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[8] See my "Radhakrishnan's Notion of Intuitive Knowledge: A Critique", *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, January 1997.

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life is seen in the vanishing of the problem" (TLP, 6.521). Narsinha Mehta's 'Vaishnava Jana to tene re kahiye' outlines the change in the *weltanschauung* – worldview of the believer. He is 'moved by others' suffering', 'he is respectful to all', 'he helps people in distress', 'he is without greed and cunning', 'he follows the path of truth and non-violence', he has control over his senses, thoughts, and deeds ', 'he does not speak ill of anyone', 'he has no avarice, covetousness or attachment', 'he has no cravings and desires.'

The *weltanschauung* of a believer as well as his attitude to explanations also undergoes a radical change. He no longer seeks causal explanations. He realizes the inadequacy of causal explanations and feels that "even when all possible scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain untouched" (TLP 6.52). He, like Wittgenstein, realizes that in religion there are varieties of explanation – some higher and some lower, depending upon one's own state or degree of belief and realization. He is convinced that, "In religion it must be the case that corresponding to every level of devoutedness there is a form of expression that has no sense at a lower level. For those still at a lower level this doctrine, which means something at the higher level, is null and void; it can only be understood wrongly, and so those words are not valid for such a person" (CW, p. 37). Gandhi too upholds this when he says, "Only richer experience can help me to a further understanding. . . . Supplication, worship, prayer, are no superstition; they are more real than the acts of eating, drinking, sitting or walking. It is no exaggeration to say that they alone are real, all else is unreal."[9] The one who has reached the higher level realizes that "only the supernatural can express the Supernatural" (CV p.3). For such a person the propositions used to describe the experiences at the lower level are

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[9]   *Autobiography*, p. 96

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meaningless and senseless. Like Gandhi, the experience of a believer teaches him "the specific limitations of reason. Just as matter misplaced becomes dirt, reason misused becomes lunacy."[10]

None of the conjectures. none of the doctrines, no matter how sound these may be. have the power to bring about this transformation. It is "by means of "a certain kind of upbringing. by shaping his life in such and such a way", 'experiences', e.g. sufferings of various sorts. 'thoughts' and our lived life that brings about this transformation in us (cf CW, p. 97). Religions, religious narratives. metaphors and similes force us "to look at the world in a different way" (OC, 92). This new way of looking at the lived world is primarily guided by purity, love, compassion, work-efficiency, dedication and service for the whole of human kind without any prejudice or partisanship. It leads us to the realization that "there are subjects where reason cannot take us far and we have to accept things on faith. Faith then does not contradict reason but transcends it. Faith is a kind of sixth sense which works in cases which are without the purview of reason."[11]

While talking about faith we must make a distinction between faith and superstition. "Religious faith and superstition are entirely different. The one springs from *fear* and is a sort of false science. The other is trusting" (CW, p.82). Religious belief is absolute trust in either a being, or a book, or a prophet, or a holy man, or a principle, or a doctrine, or all of them. As Wittgenstein, analyzing the concept of believing, says, "Believing' means, submitting to an authority. Having once submitted to it, you cannot then, without rebelling against it, first call it in question and then once again find it convincing" (CW, p. 52). Rituals, rites and practices, on the contrary, are superstitions. They are the product of our primitive sense of

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[10] Young India, 14.10.1926
[11] Harijan, 6.3.1937.

wonder and dread. However much advanced knowledge we may have about the natural phenomenon, we may not be able to get rid of our primitive fears about them. For example, in our present stage of knowledge we know how lightning or hurricanes take place. But our knowledge of their causes does not make them for us less astonishing and more mundane than they were for our forefathers. We are still astonished by them and continue to feel disquiet and live in fear of the forces that cause them. Whatever heights our civilization may attain "we cannot exclude the possibility that their civilization and the knowledge of science will not protect them from this" (CW, p. 8).

The other major distinction between faith and superstition is that while religious faith and the language in which it is expressed do not need ontology, their logic is simply guided by the fact that it embodies a certain attitude and a peculiar form of life. Superstition, on the contrary, needs a definite ontology. The difference is best illustrated by the example of two mothers taken by D.Z. Phillips. The first mother asks for Virgin Mary's protection for her baby and thereby expects things to happen favourably. The second mother, on the other hand, though also asks for a similar protection but does not expect such things to happen. All that she wants is that "the child's life be oriented in the Virgin's virtue."[12] While the former is superstitious; the latter is truly religious. The latter's can be said to be a wish embodying the religious point of view.

III

Whereas religious point of view, as has been argued above, is based on spiritual standpoint and views the universe through the spectacles of faith, science views the universe essentially as a mechanical system guided purely by causal principles. Science

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[12] "Religious Beliefs and Language Games", *Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Basil Mitchell, ed., (Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 137 -38.

is based on the Cartesian principle of causality; that is, there cannot be 'more reality' in an effect than in its cause. It is governed by rationality which is largely evidence - based. The scientists deliberate on the phenomenon under investigation and from the observed facts try to explain *a posteriori* the causes of their occurrence. They make a list of experienceable state of affairs which will count for and against the existence of the phenomena. "This may take the form of a search of *laws* – in mechanics, laws of motion — in psychology, laws of association, or of operant conditioning. Sometimes science seeks not laws, but instead the composition of things – in chemistry the composition of salt or of water; in physics, the composition of the atom; in psychology, the components and processes that 'constitute' perception or memory."[13]

The characteristics of modern science are: spirit of free enquiry which triumphs over mere opinion, untested belief, prejudice and dogma. The proofs advanced by natural and empirical sciences are objective and can be tested by anybody. As opposed to this, a religious belief is for the most part *a priori* and based on faith and revelation and in it nothing can be proved. Though some thinkers like Gandhi believe that religious beliefs are as objective as those of empirical sciences as "Everyone of us who wills can hear the voice of God, see Him face to face. But like everything else, it requires previous and definite preparation."[14] But whatever Gandhi and his like may say, the subjective element is inbuilt in the very notion of a religious belief.

The method adopted by science for arriving at the explanation of a phenomenon is best described by the medieval

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[13] Norman Malcolm, *Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View?* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.24.
[14] Harijan, 8.7.1933, p. 4.

Islamic scientists like El Khawarezmi, El Razi, Ibn El Nafis, Ibn Al-Haytham much before the appearance of Bacon, Descartes, Galileo, Kepler, Newton, on the scientific arena. Ibn Al-Haytham (965 – 1039), outlining the scientific method, said,

> *We start by observing reality . we try to select solid (unchanging) observations that are not affected by how we perceive (measure) them. We then proceed by increasing our research and measurement, subjecting premises to criticism, and being cautious in drawing conclusions . In all we do, our purpose should be balanced, not arbitrary, the search for truth, not of opininons. The efficacy of a scientific explanation is "determined by how much understanding it produces, and the amount of understanding produced by an explanation is determined by how well it systematizes and unifies our knowledge. The extent to which an explanation systematizes and unifies our knowledge can be measured by various criteria of adequacy such as simplicity (the number of assumptions made), scope (the types of phenomena explained), conservatism (fit with existing theory), and fruitfulness (ability to make successful novel predictions).* [15]

IV

It is not the case that science and scientists are able to give explanations of the entire phenomenon. In fact the scientists are aware of their shortcomings. Newton, for example, confessed in his *Principia* how "mere mechanical causes could give birth to so many regular motions" is beyond explanation. He goes on to add that he has "not been able to discover the causes" of the several phenomena. It was David Hume who taking cue from Newton showed that science and scientific method, and the rationality embedded in these, serves only a limited purpose.

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[15]   Theodore Schlick Jr, "Can Science Prove That God Does Not Exist", *Free Inquiry*, Vol. 21, No. 1, Winter 2000/01.

He argued that the events in nature are in themselves 'loose and separate' There is apparent chaos in the natural system All that scientific investigation can ever do is to place the events of nature into law-like orders and patterns. He proclaimed that the order and the notion of causality on which our notion of order is based is nothing else but just a habit of the mind. Wittgenstein too considers that the principle "the so called laws of nature are the explanation of natural phenomena (TLP, 6.371) an illusion of the modern mind. It is because in the above paradigm of science, "science has been separated from wisdom in the sense that the organization *of means* has become independent of the reflections *on ends.*"[16] There is another model of science prevalent in the Asian traditions of India, China and Islam in which reason is used in two senses: "one proceeded from cause to effect adaptation to nature, and the other proceeded from ends to ends, from intermediate ends to higher ends, and give directions to life. Western thought has let the second use of reason atrophy."[17]

In what follows I shall take the example of our ordinary language to show that explanation of all kinds and hues has in the ultimate analysis come to an end. Much before Aristotle, who described man as a being of the word, Hesiod in *Theogony* advocated the view that articulated speech is the line dividing man from myriad forms of animate beings. Making a distinction between silence and grunt he upheld that speech distinguishes man from the silence of the plants and the mumble, rumble and grumble of the beasts some of whom have a longer life, are stronger and more cunning than man. But how the word came to man, as Socrates shows in the *Cratylus,* is a riddle. According to Socrates, this question is worth asking as it goads the mind to

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[16] Roger Garaundy, "Foreword", *Traditions, Tyranny and Utopias: Essays in the Politics of Awareness,* Ashis Nandy, Oxford University Press, included in *A Very Popular Exile,* Oxford, 2007, p. v.
[17] Ibid.

explore and makes it wonder at the communicative genius of language. But it is one of those questions which have no definite answer. Answering it, according to Socrates, is beyond the human reach.

But despite this counsel of Socrates a search for a plausible explanation for the innovative power of language for communication has never been given up. In the modern times, Chomsky represents the spirit of the scientific temper thus: "We must recognize that even the most familiar phenomena require explanation . . ."[18] Following this he assumes that there must be an explanation of how a child acquires his native language. According to Chomsky the striking features of our use of language are: It is innovative; it is 'potentially infinite' in scope, that is, its use is unbounded or unlimited; it is not controlled by detectable stimuli; it is generally appropriate to the situation in which it is used/spoken. (cf., L&M, pp.11-12). Another impressive feature of language is the fact that there is a great disparity – gap – between the 'meager and degenerate' data that a child is provided during the time when he is learning his native language and the linguistic competence that the child eventually develops. To give an explanation of this disparity or gap Chomsky opines. "We must postulate an inner structure that is rich enough to account for the disparity between experience and knowledge, one that can account for the construction of the empirically justified generative grammars within the given limitation of time and access to data" (L&M, p. 79). This apparently is a speculative conjecture, not very different from the sense that is popularly assigned to a religious belief. To postulate an inner structure is a speculative conjecture because like the religious beliefs or faith, here too we are postulating something which is observed neither

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[18] Chomsky, *Language and Mind* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1972), (hereafter L& M), p. 26.

by the adults, nor by the child. What is being speculated goes on underneath the surface, hidden from everyone. This is precisely what happens in the case of a religious belief or faith.

Chomsky's problem about the explanation about language arises because he ignores Wittgenstein's observation namely that. "Language did not emerge from reasoning' (OC, 475) and that language is a form of life in which we grow. As a result Chomsky starts with the assumption that "a child's mastery of its first natural language is a triumph of reasoning – reasoning that is carried out before the child knows how to *say* anything!"[19] He enters into abstract reasoning and ends up attributing to the child something the child simply cannot engage in, namely, discovering which of all the possible languages the language of its community is. This is a nonsensical position and is contrary to facts. The fact is that 'it is simply absurd to attribute abstract theories, hypotheses, computations' to a child. Chomsky commits this blunder because he rejects the simpler explanation, namely that one knows the generative grammar of his native language by the simple fact that he grows up in the community of the language speakers. He condemns this explanation 'this is how things are' as 'superficial' and unnecessarily searches for a *deeper* explanation. He ends up in giving an explanation for the gap, for the imbalance between the input and the output by conjecturing about innate systems of abstract structures and processes which though unobservable, are supposedly inbuilt in each of us. What else is it but pure speculation!

The question what is superficial and what is deeper is like the question what is simple, which in Russell's phrase is 'the ultimate furniture of the world', and what is complex; or like the question what is elementary and what is composite. There are no absolute and final criteria to answer these questions. A

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[19] Norman Malcolm, op.cit., p. 52.

table, for example, is simple as compared with the room. But is it really simple or complex? It is complex and can be described in terms of its simpler parts like legs, top, etc. In *Philosophical Investigations* 47 to 49, Wittgenstein is at pains to explain these concepts. With the help of a variety of examples he shows that whether a thing is to be categorized as a 'simple' thing or a 'complex' or 'composite' thing depends not on their *intrinsic qualities* but on the *accepted conventions*, on *pragmatic considerations*, or on the *context in which the issue is being discussed*. In ital 47 he says, "But what are the simple constituent parts of which reality is composed? – What are the simple constituent parts of a chair? – The bits of wood of which it is made? Or the molecules, or the atoms? – 'simple' means: not composite. And here the point is: in what sense 'composite'? It makes no sense at all to speak absolutely of the 'simple parts of a chair." In the same vein one can argue that whether an explanation is a deeper one or not depends on what one understands by 'deeper' and that, as Wittgenstein says, "is of course not an answer but a rejection of the question" (ital 47). It is so because it ignores the contrasts that are at stake.

That a person can acquire competence and mastery in his native language and can use it innovatively, creatively and in hitherto unused ways, because he has lived and grown with the native speakers of the language, is as good an explanation as can be given. One does not have to look any further. This is so because all explanations, justifications, reasons must come to an end. We come to a point where the spade turns. At that point "one has to pass from explanation to mere description" (ital, 189). At what point the explanations come to an end and description takes its place cannot be determined or explained *a priori*. Not everything can be explained because all explanations, reasons and justifications are within language-games. Language game in turn

is "not based on grounds. It is not reasonable (or unreasonable) It is there – like our life" (ital. 559). And why do language games exist? There is no 'why' here because "the question is not one of explaining a language game by our experience, but of observing a language game' (ital. 655). There is no explanation for the existence of language-games, for there being a particular form of life. the pattern of action and reaction, reasons and justifications. for making promises and not fulfilling them. commitments and actions, because "commanding, questioning. recounting, chatting are as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing" (ital, 25). And to say that our participation in a form of life or a language game is a part of our natural history is not to give an explanation. It is only to say that "what has to be accepted, the given, is – one could say – *forms of life*" (ital, p.226).

All explanations are internal to a language game. Outside the language games or forms of life, there are no explanations. Outside these everything or nothing goes. The language game determines which point is to be counted as the point beyond which explanation reaches its limit and it has to give way to showing. For example if I am teaching someone the spellings of words in a language, say in English language, I can explain to him how the word 'Delhi' is spelt, I may also be able to explain to him why it is spelt the way it is. But if I am asked why the letter 'D' is written the way it is, I am at a loss. I can only say 'this is how things are'. I can no more resort to 'saying' but have to fall back on 'showing'. One can also take the examples of Vivekananda and Arjuna to illustrate that saying (explanation) has to finally give way to showing. When Vivekananda was not convinced by his teacher Parmhansa's arguments that the latter could see the Mother as clearly as Vivekananda, Parmahansa had to touch him to take him into a trance resulting in Vivekananda's seeing the Mother which radically changed his

life. Likewise when Arjuna was not convinced by Krishna's arguments, the latter had to show him His *Virâtarupa* – the cosmic vision. It is only after this that Arjuna was convinced of the teachings of Krishna and decided to participate in the war.

In religion, God and faith are treated as the culminating points of all explanation. That is where explanation comes to an end; the spade so to say turns there. In the sciences, laws of nature are regarded as the final turning points. They are so to say 'inviolable'. According to Wittgenstein, both may be right up to an extent but "The view of the ancients is, however, decidedly clearer in that they acknowledge a clear terminus, while the modern system would make it look as if it explained *everything*" (ital, 6.372). Moreover, none of the laws, principles, theories discovered or invented by human beings can be said to be 'inviolable' or 'final' or 'conclusive' because they are the outcome of human conjectures. It is beause as Shankra says in his *Brahma-Sutra-Bhashya*, II.i.11, "man's conjecture has no limits." As a result of this he goes on to say, "it is seen that an argument discovered by adepts with great effort is falsified by other adepts; and an argument hit upon by the latter is proved to be hollow by still others. So no body can rely on any argument as conclusive, for human intellect differs. If, however, the reasoning of somebody having *vide* fame, say for instance, Kapila or someone else be relied on under the belief that this must be conclusive, even so it surely remains inconclusive, inasmuch as people, whose greatness is well recognized and who are the initiators of scriptures (or schools of thought) – for instance, Kapila, Kanada and others – are seen to hold divergent views".

THE TENSED THEORY OF TIME AND THE QUESTION OF TRUTHMAKERS

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts a critical appraisal of 'time', a cardinal topic in metaphysics. Problems about 'the nature of 'time' particularly figure in metaphysics and some other aspects of philosophy in general, since antiquity[1]. In this regard, distinct positions have been arguably marked out. Arising from this are new charts of discourse on some fundamental questions, which are subjects of contemporary debates in the philosophy of time. For example, according to McTaggart, there are two ways by which we distinguish positions in time: Tensed theory (also known as *A*-theory, *A*-series or the dynamic theory), and the tenseless theory (also known as *B*-theory, *B*-series or the static theory)[2]. By tensed theory, he means that time is characterized by the division into past, present and future; and by tenseless theory, he means that time is characterized by the relations of being later than, earlier than or simultaneous with.

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[1] Eva Bann and Charles M.Sherover , "Are We in Time? and Other Essays on Time and Temporality," *The Review of Metaphysics,* vol. 69, Issue 2, 2005 p. 450, had noted that the development of theories on Time has been traced to start from "the Greek understanding of time as the structure of physical processes, through time as the structure of human experience in later antiquity, to the modern attempt to reconcile quantitative with experienced time and finally to make temporality the crucial feature of human being."

[2] It must be noted that there are variations in the positions held by philosophers who subscribe to the positions of these theories. For example, *presentism* is an example of a position among the tensed theorist.

I argue here that contrary to the tensed theorists, the truthmakers of temporal locations are not real in the sense of objective-independent existence. My position is that the tensed theorist's conception of time is not essential to the reality of time, because, there are problems asserting what are the truthmakers of temporal statements. The point is that, for the tensed theorists, it is important that if the truth-value of temporal statements is to be ascertained, it is essential that events, regarded as truthmakers are, in some objective sense. real. My arguments, however, point to the fact that these truthmakers are not real as the tensed theorists assert.

Introduction

The distinct positions in the theories of time underscore our ordinary intuitive conception on time. McTaggart introduces a metaphysical inquiry when he raises the issue of whether an *A*-series (the tensed theory of time) or *B*-series (the tenseless theory of time) is essential to the reality of time. McTaggart settles this question by appealing to what is needed to account for change. For McTaggart, there cannot be time without change. For him, whatever is a necessary condition for the possibility of change is also a necessary condition for the existence of time. He argues further that the *A*-series or the tensed theory is a necessary condition for change, in that it is part of the analysis of change, and so it is a necessary condition for time.[3]

However, contrary to this. I argue that the *A*-series or the tensed theory, is not a necessary condition for time. I shall do this by considering the question: what makes a temporal statement true or false? In other words, it is important to consider the ontological status of events that occupy different temporal locations: past, present and future, which make temporal statements about such events true or false. The questions arise as follows – what is the truthmaker of present tensed statement? What is it that

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[1] For a detail accounts of McTaggart's arguments, see J.M.E. McTaggart, *The Nature of Existence*, Vol. II, Book V, Chapter 33, (Cambridge University Press, 1927).

makes a past tensed statement or a future tensed statement true? Put differently, the problem addressed is whether events, which are labeled future, present, and past (for the tensed theorist) and 'earlier than', 'later than' and 'simultaneous with' (for the tenseless theorist) actually exist in reality or they are merely part of mental reality which correspond to no event.

The tensed theorists assert that in some objective, mind-dependent sense, the events labeled by the temporal locations are real as truthmakers, which determine the truth-value of temporal statements. In fact, according to one version of the theories, there is a distinction among the three temporal locations; 'the present is privileged'[4]. On the other hand, the tenseless theorists hold that events characterized by the temporal locations lack objective reality; 'they are features of a particular perspective on reality, a reality that is itself not tensed'. As against the presentism, for example, the tenseless theories of time assert that no one of the three locations is privileged, all times (future, present and past) are real[5].

'Time' is a common phenomenon among human beings. It is, in fact, a subject of discourse in most physical and human disciplines[6].

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[4]   Craig Bourne, "A Theory of Presentism", *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 26, No. 1, March, 2006, p. 1. Other proponents of the tensed theories include Ludlow G, Bigelow J, Bourne, C.P., Micheal Tooley, to mention a few. It must be noted that Craig's statement of the tensed theories represents Presentism, a version of the tensed theories. Other positions in the tensed theory are the 'No-futurism, which believes that the past and the present are, but that the future is not, an example proponent of this position is Tooley. Another theory in Tensed theory is 'Branching-futurism which holds that the past and the present are linear and actual, but that the future consists of branching possibilities. An example of Branching theorist in McCall.

[5]   By 'real', it is meant events always exist. They are not in the past residing there as something that has come and gone, nor in the present, being privileged to be present as the presentists would claim, nor in the future waiting to exist; they always exist and thus none of the three is regarded as being privileged.

[6]   Hence, we talk about distinctions between the time of physics, as used in the physical sciences, and the time of living experience, as used mostly in the humanities.

However, philosophical problems arise when we try to understand the fundamental features of phenomena that are basic to our experience. One of the most basic experiences, and one with which we have been most perplexed and puzzled is time. In thinking about the nature of time, the puzzlement one often finds oneself is described by St Augustine that "when no one asked him. he knew what it was, being asked, however, he no longer did."[7]

There are constellations of issues that contribute to the seeming mystry about the nature of time. Part of this is the need to clarify the relationship between time and the perception of time. Does time exist as an entity independently of the perceiving mind? This problem is underpinned by the positions of the realists and idealists on the nature of time. For the realists, time really exists just like some other "material objects: it existed before mind appeared in the world, and will continue to exist after all minds have gone."[8] In other words, time exists as one of the furniture in the universe which exists outside, and independently of our mind. One way of understanding the realist's conception of time is to ascertain the reality of time in what are physically used in 'showing' or 'measuring' time such as clocks, seasons, etc. The problem with this is that distinctions could be made between what time is and the mechanism for 'showing' or 'measuring' time. In other words, time is one thing, the means or mechanism of noting, measuring, or showing *it* is another. While

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[7]   St. Augustine, *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, E.B. Pusey, trans. (New York: Collier Books, 1961), p.23. In fact, Some philosophers, notably Zeno and McTaggart, had argued that time is nothing because it doesn't exist. In a similar vein, F. H. Bradley argues that Time has most evidently proved not to be real. However, it must be noted that for most philosophers, time exists. The problem is, as it is for most philosophical issues, philosophers do not usually agree on what time is.

[8]   James Jeans, *Physics and Philosophy* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1981), pp. 58-59.

the realist's claim about the existence of these mechanisms could be understood, the question that needs answer is 'what is time outside of these mechanisms?' Contrary to the realist view is the idealist position that time is a creation of the mind. In other words, time is not a stratum that exists just like any other objects; it is derived from human consciousness.

In line with this distinction, James Jeans identifies four kinds of time - conceptual time, perceptual time, physical time and absolute time.' Conceptual time is an abstract construction and exists only in the mind of the person who is creating it by thinking of it. By perceptual time is meant the experience and the records of the flow of time by any conscious being. Conceptual and perceptual time exist in the consciousness of beings. They both exemplify the idealist conception of time. Physical time is the time of the active world of physics and astronomy. Unlike conceptual and perceptual times, which are private to the person that conceives or perceives of it, physical time exists out there as part of the fabrics of the world. It is public in the sense that its existence does not depend on any perceiver. Absolute time is a form of synchronized time measured mechanically. Both physical and absolute time is an example of the realist conception of time.

Another problem about time is - what is the present, past and future? Why does the present *move* into the past and the future *move* into the present?[9] Closely related to this is the need to clarify the status of our ordinary or intuitive division of time into past, present and future. If we know what the present, past and future are, then we ought to be able to answer questions such as: 'How long does the present last?' 'Does the past really

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[9] In fact, there are problems with the conception of this question: what is the ontological status of 'past', 'present' and 'future'? In what sense do they *move*? It is important to get clear what sense of movement is intended here, in order to elucidate the issues.

exist?' 'Does the future exist?' The ontological status of the common division of time into past, present and future is a source of controversy. It is doubted whether the future and past are as real as the present, the future that is referred to by the word "*now*."[10] Hence, philosophers of time are deeply divided on the question on what sort of ontological differences there are among the present, past and future. Presentists argue that necessarily only present objects and present experiences are real; and we (conscious beings) recognize this in the special 'vividness' of our present experience. The growing-universe theory argues that the past and present are both real, but the future is not yet real. The more popular alternative theory is that there are no significant ontological differences among present, past and future. This view is called 'eternalism' or 'the block universe theory.'

Moreover, in respect of 'movement' of the present into the past, and of the future into the present, the point of suspicion is on whether this conception of the movement or flow of time is a property of time as opposed to being some feature of human perception. Part of the issue is that assuming that time moves or flows, is the flow regular? At what interval does the flow occur? What orders or organizes the movement or flow? For example, C.D. Broad has argued that the point of time flow or time movement is meaningless. This is because, according to him, "if anything moves, it must move with some determinate velocity. It will always be sensible to ask, 'How fast does it move?'[11] The question how fast a thing moves can only be answered in relation to time, then the question 'How fast does time moves 'in time?'

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[10] This is the position of the Presentists championed by Craig Bourne. In another sense, Michael Tooley also subscribes to this view. This is because, to him, the future is unreal, but the past and present are real. For details, see Michael Tooley, *Time, Tense, and Causation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. xvi - 399.

[11] C. D. Broad "Ostensible Temporality." In J.J.C. Smart,ed., *Problem of Space and Time* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company. Inc., 1976), pp. 330-331]

seems to be meaningless. This is because it demands that we use time, which is yet unknown to answer an enquiry about time.

These arrays of issues are the central themes in the philosophy of time, it is obvious that the question: 'what is time?' has no straightforward answer. A full theory of time should address these issues. Narrower theories of time will focus on resolving a few members of these constellations. What I propose to do is to critically examine an attempt made by the tensed theory at resolving one of these issues (what are the truthmakers of temporal statements?)

The tensed theory of time is characterized or defined by the series of position which runs from the far past through the near future to the far future, or conversely"[12]. In other words, the tensed theory of time takes seriously our intuitive division of time into past, present and future, in which case, the only difference between being past, present and future is that events can legitimately be called 'past' after they have occurred, 'present' when they are occurring, and 'future' before they occur. Intuitively, the tensed temporal locations do not denote genuine properties[13]; the difference between past, present and future is merely verbal. Contrary to this view, Barry Dainton argues that 'it is hard not to feel that there is something more to be said'. Dainton raises this point to challenge our intuitive belief that tensed predicates are mere verbal distinctions. For him, there must be something in reality that corresponds to the talk of events moving from the future through the present and into the past[14]. It is what underscores the search for the truthmakers that make

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[12]   J.M.E. McTaggart, "Time", *The Nature of Existence*, vol II, Bk V, Chapter 33. (Cambridge University Press, 1927), pp.87-88

[13]   By this I mean that present, past and future are not real in some sense of being objective entities.

[14]   Barry Dainton, *Time and Space* (Chesham: Acumen Publishing Limited, 2007), pp. 7, 67.

temporal predicates true. However, Dainton's position and the tensed theorists who uphold it need to be revisited.

In the first place, the tensed theorist's division of time into past, present and future expresses the picture of time flow from future to the present and from the present to the past. What this conception of time flow presupposes is that events change their temporal locations. Events located in the future are now located in the present, and events that exist in the present flow into the past. Change is, therefore, a property of locations of events. Since, following the tensed theorists, the change in the location of events determine the truth condition of tensed statements, if these locations can change, then the truthmakers of temporal statements are also susceptible to change. Moreover, given the idea of time flow, being present is a transient property of events; it is that an event in the present cannot be permanently in the present, it moves into the past. In other words, what is present is only temporarily so. In another moment, it could become past. In which case, what exists in the future will, with the passage of time. become an event existing in the past. The truthmakers of tensed statements, which are the tensed facts, then obtain at some times but not others. By tensed fact is the claim that event occupy a specific temporal location at a particular point in time. This is because an event, which ceases to be located in the present, no longer has the fact of presentness, it is no longer present, and a present tensed statement about it would be false.

According to the tensed theory, the truthmakers of tensed statements are called tensed facts. Tensed facts are facts about the temporal position of the event. The tensed fact of a present tensed statement is the fact that the event being referred to by the statement is occurring at the moment. Hence, what makes tensed statements such as

(1) 'it is raining *now* in the capital city of Nigeria'.
(2) 'the school *was sometimes* on holiday'.
(3) 'it *no longer* rained'.
(4) 'the world *will soon* come to an end'

true is that for (1), the rain in the capital city of Nigeria, that is Abuja, is (the event), in some non-perspectival sense, present. In other words, there is the particular event of rainfall that shares the characteristic of being present. As for (2), the state of affair of the school being on holiday was, at a point obtained, but, presently, the state of affair resides in the past; not part of the events that exist in the present. Also, (3) is, in the same vein, noting that the event of rainfall was, at a point, a present state of affair, but it is not now a feature of the present states of affair; it has moved into another realm: the past, where it now exists. Statement (4) is true because of the fact that the state of affairs that make it true neither exist among the existing states of affairs nor among events in the past; it is an event yet to occur. The point is that tensed fact - the fact that events change their temporal locations - underscores the position of tensed theory of time. This is because, as the tensed theorists assert, the temporal labels: past, present and future, merely show the picture of how time flows; from future to the present and from the present to the past.

The tenseless theory, on the other hand, is characterized by the series of positions which runs from earlier to later, or conversely. That is, the tenseless theory denies the reality of temporal passage (the idea of time flow or time movement), and it also takes our intuitive conception simply to reflect our perspective on time rather than the nature of time itself. In other words, there is no such thing as time flow or movement of time. Events which serve as the truthmakers of temporal statements do not change their temporal locations. An event e is either earlier than event e_1, or e_1 is later then e. e and e_1 temporal

positions do not change. The tenseless theory, in contrast to the tensed theory. also rejects the existence of tensed facts, and explains the truth of tensed statements in terms of unchanging temporal facts. On one version of the tenseless theory, a token present-tensed judgement. 'It is now raining in Abuja.' is true if and only if the token is simultaneous with the event it describes. If such truth conditions obtain. they obtain for all times, so tensed tokens have a time-invariant truth-value.

According to McTaggart, the former is called the *A* -series. while the latter is named the *B*-series. However, it could be argued that so categorized. the distinction between *A*-series and *B*-series seemed obscure. This is because, as Poidevin argues, "when the point from which something is judged to be earlier and later is the *present* moment, 'earlier' and 'later' become synonymous with 'past' and 'future' respectively. The crucial feature of the *B*-series or the tenseless theory, however, is that positions in it are unchanging: if it is true at one time that event *x* is earlier than event *y*, then it is true at all times that *x* is earlier than *y*. Temporal positions in the *A*-series or the tensed theory, in contrast, do change: what is now (in the) present was once (in the) future and will be (in the) past."[15] Hence, for the A-series, time has the properties of being past, being present and being future. For the B-series, time has the relation of being earlier than, being later than, and being simultaneous with. Philosophers that "posit an objective distinction between what is present or what is past and what is future, are called *A*-Theorists"[16]. According to some of the A-theorists, the present is distinguished from past and future in a way that is not relative to any other temporal thing, such as

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[15] Robin Le Poidevin, ed., *Questions of Time and Tense* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p.12

[16] Dean W. Zimmerman, "The A theory of Time, the B Theory of Time and 'Taking Tense Seriously' ", *Dialectica*, Vol 59, No 4, 2003, p. 402. Zimmerman identified some prominent A theorists to include C.D. Broad. Arthur Prior, Peter Geach and Roderick Chisholm.

a context of utterance, a time or a frame of reference. According to presentism, a version of the *A-theory*, the present is the only reality. "past and future things (or events) do not exist and that all quantified statements that seem to carry commitment to the past or future things (or events) are either false or susceptible of paraphrase into statements that avoid the implication".[17] Events are temporally related to one another in one way or the other. Time is defined along side this relations. Hence, events are distinguished from one another by the use of phrases such as 'later than', 'earlier than', simultaneous to'.

The point of the tensed theory is that the truthmaker of tensed statements are that the events or states of affair which the statements are about, occupy distinct temporal locations. The specific temporal location of events or states of affairs categorized as being present, past and future are what determine the truth or falsity of temporal statement, thereby ascertaining that the location of these events are necessary in talking about time. According to the tensed theory then, we should 'take it as our datum or starting point that, in some sense, things in time *pass* into, through, and out of existence. This means that, concerning anything that ever exists, we can say that, until it exists, it draws ever closer to existing, that while it exists it grows older and that after it ceases to exist, it recedes ever further into the past'.[18] It can also mean, given another sense of understanding the words 'into', 'through' and 'out of existence', that the *future* from where things pass into, and the *present* where things pass through, and the *past* where things pass out to other distinct locations are themselves *specific locatable spots*. Events that exist in the future are distinct from those in the present, and different from those in the past. Given this, it could therefore be argued that an event

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[17] Zimmerman, p.402

[18] Richard Taylor, *Metaphysics* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall., Inc., 1963), p 75.

passes from the future to the present and then to the past. In this regards, it is important that a foolproof tensed theory of time should include an account or a mechanism of how an events transverse from one block of temporal location to the other. It is this account or mechanism that is difficult to ascertain. This lends credence to the claim of the tenseless theorists that events are not tensed, but stand in relation to one another. No event is indeed present, past or future; but one event is either earlier than or later than the other.

Moreover, let us accept for the sake of argument, the tensed theorists claim that the same event that resides in the future becomes or come into present and later goes into the past, now is: *is it events that moves from one temporal location to another or temporal locations move, and by so doing events get whatever temporal labels they have?* If we accept the former, then, as earlier noted, there would be need to explain the phenomenon of events change or movement of event. Moreover, if events change, there would be the need to ascertain whether it is still the same event that changes from one temporal location to another. On the other hand, if we accept that temporal locations themselves move or change, and thereby affect the temporal locations of events, there are some inherent problems to resolve. Some of which is to find out whether temporal locations are entities which moves or not. Second, we need to examine the process or mechanism that wheels the course of the movement. Also, the idea of tensed 'fact' suggests that the idea that events of states of affairs move from one temporal location to another is a fact observable in the world. This, however, is not really so. It is true that human beings intuitively talk about events in the present, past and future, it is contestable that this notion is supported by an objective fact observable in the world. This exacerbates the point that the reality of truthmakers, as asserted in the tensed theory, is inherently difficult to defend.

Take another issue. Following the tensed theorists, particularly the presentists, the tensed fact that makes a present tense statement to be true is the fact that the event that is happening is locatable in the present time. The problem here is what does it mean for an event to be locatable in the present? For instance, can we say that present tensed statements, such as 'the national anthem is being sung now', 'the news is now being cast' or 'the examination starts now; etc, correspond to any event currently going on or happening? If someone asks, as Findlay does, "But what are they singing just *now*? We should not widen our reference to cover the whole evening concert, (or the whole of the news bulletin, or the whole of the examinations), but narrow it to apply to some line, or phrase or word or note of the national anthem. Following this, Findlay reasons that we can readily be persuaded to give up saying that anything which takes an appreciable time is happening now".[19] Hence, in this respect, since a whole event, 'the entire national anthem, entire news bulletin and the whole of the examination cannot be happening once, but only a component of the event at a particular point in time, and the present is an insignificant duration which can only accommodate a finite component of event, which is not the entire event, then the truth of a present tense statement is not confirmed by its truthmaker. An envisaged response to Findlay could be that by the temporal location 'present', is meant what is happening now, as against what has happened in the past or will happen in the future. This response introduces another conceptual complication. What is *now*?

One suggestion is that it means 'currency' or 'immediacy'. How is this represented or measured; in terms of seconds, minutes or what? Neither of these would suffice. This is because, first, the concept about the measurement of time begs

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[19] J.N. Findlay, "Time: A Treatment of Some Puzzles", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 19, 1941, p. 101

the question; it assumes, and already, it is measuring the idea of time which is being explained. Second, if *now* means currently or immediately, then if, for example, I am listening to a piece of music, the fragment of the music that occupies the current or immediate moment called 'now' would be a particular letter or a sound, which is incomprehensible,,such that I cannot really say what it is that I am listening to. Thus, the fact of what occupies the present is difficult to ascertain; it is consequently difficult to ascertain the truth of a present tensed about the piece of music I am listening to.

Moreover, given that the tensed theory also defends the idea of time flow or time movement, and since for Reichenbach, "when we speak of the flow of time, we usually regard it as the flux of some objective entity which we perceive and the continual escaping of which we cannot prevent",[20] a tensed theory has to account for thus: "how is it possible for all the solid objects and people around us to melt away into the past and for a new order of object and person to emerge mysteriously from the future?"[21]However, in raising this criticism, Reichenbach and Findlay have confused an object with an event. The difference between the two would reveal that it is not fair on the tensed theorist to demand an account of the movement or flow of time in terms of how objects moves from one location to the other. A clue on this distinction is given by Noe. For him,

> *objects are timeless in the sense that they exist whole and complete at a moment of time. Objects have no temporal extent. Events, in contrast, are creatures of time. They are temporally extended in nature. They are never whole. At the beginning, they have not yet achieved a conclusion. At the end, their beginning is done with. To suppose that*

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[20] Hans Reichenbach, *The Direction of Time* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), p.20

[21] Findlay, op. cit. p. 105

the beginning of an event would be available, and so present, at its conclusion, in the way that the rear of the tomatoes is present, would be to suppose, confusedly, that events were in fact object-like structures.[22]

Granted this position, even if the criticism did not hold, Noe's distinction creates more problems for the tensed theorist in the sense that an event that is 'never whole' is either in the future, or present or in the past. Would an event that is yet to occur, presumably in the future, possess the beginning and a conclusion? Moreover, given Findlay's earlier charges that to say the national anthem is being sung *now* (indicating that the anthem exists in the present) is about only a single note of the anthem, which is not the anthem. So, to say that a song is being sang presently means an event is presently occupying the present temporal location, but since it is only a fragment of the event that exists at a particular point in time, then the whole event did not take place now. This means that it is false to say that the event is taking place *now*. To put an earlier made point more succinctly, the truthmaker of a present tensed statement like 'the national anthem is being sung now' would be difficult to ascertain, because what exists in the *now* is not the singing of an anthem, but a note in the anthem.

Protagonists of the tensed theory of time could argue from the point of view of Brogaard Berit that 'truth supervenes on being'[23] That is a true statement presupposes real existence of whatever the statement is about, to strengthen or justify the belief that there are tensed facts which serve as truthmakers of tensed statements. A true tensed statement presupposes the existence of a fact out there upon which the truth of the statement supervenes.

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[22] Alva Noe, "Experience of the World in Time", *Analysis*, January, Vol, 66, No. 1, 2006, p.28
[23] Brogaard Berit, "Tensed Relations", *Analysis*, July, Vol. 66, No. 3, 2006, p. 198

As Berit has observed. "to account for the truth of past and future tensed claims, presentists like Bigelow and Crisp (and the tensed theorist in general) often posit tensed properties".[24] The tensed properties are facts about the world which the tensed statement is about. Consequently, the tensed properties are equivalence of tensed facts. For example, "property of being a place where dinosaurs roamed grounds the truth of (the past tensed statement) 'dinosaurs once roamed the earth': if it had been false that dinosaurs once roamed the earth, then the earth would not have had the property of being a place where dinosaurs roamed".[25] So. tensed statements already presuppose tensed facts which serve as truthmakers that confirm their truth value.

However, this defense of the tensed theory puts the cart before the horse because the truth of a tensed statement presupposes an existence which serves as the truthmaker of the temporal statement. Which is that the tensed theorist already assumes the truth of the temporal statement. What therefore accounts for the truth value of the temporal statement in the first instance? This question returns the defender of the tensed theory to the starting point to justify the truth of tensed statements.

Suppose we accept the defender's argument that a true tensed statement presupposes the existence of whatever it is about, if we make a tensed statement about round square, then there exists out there, a roundsquare, which is the truthmaker of the tensed statement about round square. But a round square is an abstract entity which did not exist in reality, what then is the tensed property upon which the truth of the tensed statement about round square supervenes? Noe's notion of perceptual presence could be cited as escape route for the tensed theorists. For Noe, we experience the presence of what is out of view by

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

understanding, implicitly, that our relation to what is out of view is such that movement of the eyes, or the body, brings it into view, and such movements of the thing itself makes a sensory difference to what we experience. So what "we cannot see now are present in experience now, even though we don't see them now, because we are now coupled to them in a special, immediate, familiar, sensorimotor manner". [26]

Two issues are involved here. First, following the notion of perceptual presence pushes the truthmaker of tensed statement from real existence of things in the world, to the experience and skill of the person who utters such a statement. If the utterer of a tensed statement that is about an abstract entity is well equipped with 'adequate' skills and experiences, that helps in understanding the implicit relation between the abstract entity and a way of 'perceiving' it. The problem here is in stating what would count as an adequate skill that could enable one have a perception of a non-existent entity. The other problem is that a non-existent entity cannot be brought into view through movement of the eyes or the body as the notion of perceptual experience require.

However, in assessing the notion of perceptual presence, which its critics now called 'presence-as-skill-based-access' view, it has been argued that given the notion, we cannot 'understand the way in which the past is present in our current experience in terms of skill-based access'. This is because the episodes which occupy the past are over, done with, inaccessible.[27] This criticism narrows the issue to what is in the past. Given the ambition of the proponents of the notion of perceptual experience, we should be able to account for 'what is out of view', not only what is in past, but also what cannot be experienced, namely, abstract

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[26]   Noe, op. cit., p. 28.
[27]   Prominent among the critics is Andy Clark, "That Lonesome Whistle: A Puzzle for the Sensorimotor Model of Perceptual Experience," *Analysis*, 66:22-25, 2006.

entities. This ambition involves certain requirements yet unfulfilled which makes it difficult to achieve. Hence, the notion of perceptual presence fails to provide an escape route for the tensed theorist on how to account for the truthmaker of a tensed statement on abstract entities. The implication is that the truth-value of such a tensed statement cannot be confirmed. This means that the tensed theory fails to account for the truth-value of tensed statements. If we cannot account for the truth of a past, present. or future tensed statement, it is difficult to agree that an event described by a past tensed statement as being in the past is really locatable in the past. This is a serious indictment for the tensed theory which categorizes time as being past, present and future. Such a division corresponds to nothing in reality; statements about them cannot be certified to be true. As shown above. the ideas of temporal location – past. present and future – and the idea of tensed facts – that events or states of affairs move or change from one temporal location to another – which are essential to the thesis of *A series* conception of time, are not clearly defensible. Hence, there are doubts whether the tensed theory of time offers an adequate theory that provides an account of time.

Attempts have been made to address central issues in determining what is essential to time; the issue of the truthmakers of tensed statements. It is argued that the tensed theory assertion that there are tensed facts out there, in the world, that serve as the truthmakers of tensed statement is not defensible. Several problems emerge against the different understanding of the position of the the tensed theorists on the concepts of tensed facts. It is difficult to understand what it means to claim that there are, in the world, possibly independently of human mind. some temporal or tensed facts, which confirm the truth-value status of our tensed statements. What we are inclined to believe is the tenseless theorist assertion that there are no facts in the

world that makes temporal statements true. What makes temporal statements true. according to the tenseless theory, are the tenseless facts. By this theory, the event being described by the statement occurs earlier than, later than, or simultaneous with a given period t^*. The t^* depends on the perspective of the speaker, not what exists in the world. Hence, one can say that writing this paper is earlier than having a grandchild. In this wise,one is not committed to saying that a state of affair, i.e. having a grandchild, exists in particular location, in order to determine the truth of my statement. It must be noted, however, that the position of the tenseless theory is not foolproof. A few problems definitely emerge in the assumptions of the theory.

EXISTENTIALISM: ITS PRECURSORS IN THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

The question on the problem and meaning of human existence falls within the philosophical trend known as existentialism. Ever since Socrates. Western philosophy from its initial notoriously speculative concern with the cosmos to inquiry about man, the question of 'Being' or human existence has attracted the penetrating analysis of philosophical enterprise, particularly the 19th century philosophic movement of existentialism.

Existentialism as a philosophical doctrine has diverse but reconcilable definitions or interpretations such that the term can be broadly accepted to mean 'the philosophy of human existence.' If 'existentialism' simply means the philosophy of human existence, then to trace it to the relatively recent 19th century philosophical disquisitions, particularly those of the Danish thinker, Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) and the German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1990), is to conclude that the concern of philosophy with human person and his existence is a recent phenomenon. But this, as we know, is far from the truth. Existentialism can be argued to be as old as philosophy itself. Some of the themes or trends (such as individualism, subjectivity, freedom, relativism and autonomy) expressed in modern existentialism are also found in the writings of earlier philosophers such as the Sophists, Socrates, Epicurus, Descartes and others.

This paper examines the doctrine and origin of contemporary existentialism. This includes some motivations which provoked

an intensified concern with the problem of human condition and existence, especially since the nineteenth century. In this context, we argue that modern existentialism is simply 'a new wine in old bottle'. Therefore, modern existentialism has rudiments in the writings of earlier philosophers.

Introduction

Existentialism, in its contemporary form and practice, is uniquely a recent phenomenon, having taken root in the 19th century philosophical disquisitions. Its origin is frequently traced to the philosophical writings of the Danish thinker, Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) and the German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), who were remarkably dissatisfied with traditional philosophy, perceived as superficial, academic and remote from existential reality.

What is existentialism? According to Paul Ricoer, it is not appropriate to talk of existentialism but of existentialisms.[1] Ital defines existentialism as the "doctrine deriving from Soren Kierkegaard that man is not part of an ordered metaphysical scheme, but that individuals must create their own being each in his specific situation and environment."[2] This definition validates the claim by some scholars that existentialism began with the writings of Kierkegaard in the 19th century. It also stresses the importance of individual human decision as well as the isolation of the human person from any metaphysical world or scheme. Worthy of note, however, is that the (concrete) individual which this definition stresses, represents just one important aspect of the conceptual edifice of existentialism.

The *Webster's New World Dictionary* defines existentialism as "the doctrine that existence takes precedence

[1] David Stewart & A. Mickunas, *Exploring Phenomenology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1943)

[2] Owen Watson, ed., *Longman Modern English Dictionary* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1958).

over essence and holding that man is totally free and responsible for his act This responsibility is the source of dread and anguish that encompass mankind."[3] *American Heritage Dictionary of English Language* construes existentialism as "a philosophy that emphasized the uniqueness and isolation of the individual experience in a hostile or indifferent universe; regards human existence as unexplainable and stresses freedom of choice and responsibility for the consequences of one act's."[4] To the earlier key concept of 'individual human decision', the last two definitions add the concepts of 'human freedom' and 'choice'. 'misery' and 'isolation of human existence' and, again, 'existence' (in contrast to 'essence'), 'responsibility', 'dread' and 'anguish'.

Apart from insightful conceptions of the forgoing definitions, they are simplistic and inadequate. They lack a vast array of issues or problems which existentialism addresses. This point is further buttressed by Alastair MacIntyre. He points out the inherent inadequacy of seeking to reduce existentialism to a simple holistic meanings or to define it in terms of a set of philosophical formulas. While this indicates the reason why some scholars avoid giving a specific definition of existentialism, Alastair Macintyre nevertheless, recommends that the meaning of existentialism is best rendered in terms of its themes. He puts it this way,

> *Existentialism may perhaps be considered most fruitfully as a historical movement in which connections of dependence and influence can be traced from one writer to another. Thus, even if two writers who are both rightly called existentialists differ enormously in doctrine, they*

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[3] See *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language.* 3rd Ed. (1992) Houghton; Mifflin Company Electronic version licensed from IVSD Corporation.

[4] A. Macintyre, "Existentialism", *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol.3 . P. Edwards, ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc. 1967).

can be placed in the same family tree. But this only throw
the question of definition one stage back. How do we
select our philosophical pedigrees The key themes are
the individual and systems; intentionality; being and
absurdity; the nature and significance of choice; the role
of extreme experiences and the nature of communication.

Indeed, the difficulty involved in giving a concise definition of existentialism is exasperated by the obvious diversity in the works of those classified as existentialist philosophers. To be sure, they reveal that existentialism is not a homogenous school of thought or an organized philosophical system.

Traditionally, existentialism is categorized into atheistic and theistic forms. In the context of this paper, the atheistic form of existentialism represents an ontological position involving a denial or exclusion of God, transcendent and supernatural realities. It rejects, among others, the idea of objective absolutes. It maintains an anti-supernaturalist posture, holding that subjective existence has primacy over any substratum of the supernatural. Theistic existentialism contrasts with the atheistic brand. It affirms a belief in the existence of God and addresses some of the same themes as in atheistic existentialism from religious perspectives.[6] Soren Kierkegaard, Gabriel Marcel, Miguel De Unamuno, Martin Buber, Karl Barth, Rudolph Bultman, Paul Tillich and Joseph Omoregbe.[7] examples of religious or theological existentialists on the one hand, while

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[5] For these definitions of atheistic and theistic existentialism, check www.angelfire.com/az/existentialism.html.

[6] ibid

[7] We classify Joseph Omoregbe among religious or theological existentialists on the strength of his philosophy of human existence. For example, he argues that "the best thing for man to do in order to get out of his predicament is to seek his Maker, his Creator, dialogue with him... This process of dialogue and interaction with one's Creator is what is called religion and it is the only authentic way out of the human predicament." For this see J. Omoregbe, *The Human Predicament: Has Human Life on Earth any Ultimate Purpose, any Ultimate Meaning? - An Existential Inquiry.* (Lagos, Nigeria: University of Lagos Press, 2001).

Nietzsche. Sartre and Camus, on the other hand, belong to the atheist divide of existentialism.

This division is nevertheless oversimplified. There are some existentialist philosophers who do not fit this scheme of categorization. For example, the German existentialsts, Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger are difficult to classify under either of the traditional divide. In other words, Jaspers and Heidegger stand apart from others. They are not Christians in the traditional sense. However, strictly defined, they are not atheists. For instance, Jaspers' concept of transcendence cannot be easily classified either as theistic or atheistic because he repudiates all these. According to Jim. I. Unah, "Heidegger's ontology, in which he talks relentlessly about Being, reveals a quasi-religious purpose at work. Yet his elaborate references from Holderlius' poetry strongly suggest that he accepts the declaration of the death of God with stoic equanimity."[8]

Expectedly too, existentialist philosophers differ in their methods and treatment of the basic doctrines as well as in their use of the key concepts in existentialist discourse. This situation seem to render existentialism a concealment of vague generalities.[9] According to a foremost scholar of existentialism to be Walter Kaufmann,

> *Certainly existentialism is not a school of thought nor reducible to any set tenets. The three writers who appear invariably on every list of existentialists – Jaspers, Heidegger and Sartre – are not in agreement on essentials. By the time we consider adding Ritke, Kafka and Camus, it becomes plain that one essential feature shared by all these men is their perfervid individualism.*[10]

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[8] J. Unah, *Heidegger's Existentialism: An Essay on Applied Ontology* (Lagos, Nigeria: Panaf Press).

[9] Ibid

[10] W. Kaufmann, ed., *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre* (New York: Dover, 1962).

This means that existentialist philosophers, chiefly hold that the concrete individual human being is an inescapable point of departure for all philosophies worthy of the name. The consequence is that existentialism is a philosophy that regards the problem or issue of human existence as central and fundamental. Some scholars such as Friedman and Max Charlesworth therefore prefer to describe existentialism as a label, mood or style of philosophizing rather than a school.

In this context, existentialism signifies a temper uniting divergent schools of thought rather than being an essentially unified approach. This is true of Max Charlesworth's characterization of existentialism. According to him, existentialism is more of an intellectual mood than a coherent creed or body of doctrines, more of an outlook or mind set than a philosophical party line, more of a method or approach than a school of thought, and clearly a protest against any systematized abstract speculative knowledge.[11] To James Collins, existentialism embodies a legitimate continuation of several important European traditions, and it addresses itself to vital problems of the greatest contemporary movement of both philosophy and life.[12]

Therefore, any attempt to reduce existentialism to simple, absolute terms is an unwarranted oversimplification of a tremendously complex phenomenon.[13] Yet, in the view of some philosophers, it is doubtful if existentialism is entirely philosophy in the strict sense of the word. For example, the nature of the literary works of Franz Kafka (1883-1924) speaks volumes of

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[11] M. Charlesworth, *The Existentialists and Jean-Paul Sartre* (Queen'sland University of Queen'sland Press, 1975).

[12] J. Collins, *The Extentialists: A Critical Study* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952).

[13] M. Friedman, ed., "Introduction." In *The Worlds of Existentialism: A Critical Study* (New York: Random House Inc, 1964).

existentialism. Certainly, Kafka is an existentialist because as Friedman argues, "it is not because Kafka reads any existentialist philosophy into his novels and stories, as one sometimes feel that Sartre does, but because he deals with concrete existence itself and arrives at a unique understanding of it."[14]

This view presupposes that there exists existentialist trend in virtually every form of human thought and expression, including art, poetry, theology, drama, novel, psychology and the like. Other literary existentialists are Fyodor Mikhallovich Dostoevsky (1821-1881), Rainer Maria (1875-1926), Andre Gide (1869-1951) and Andre Malraux. The most noted men in the field of existential psychology in addition to Kierkegaard, Jaspers and Sartre are Viktor Frank, Rollo May, Ludwig Binswanger and Roland Kuhn.

Therefore, existentialism is more of a general name or label or appellation for a variety of thoughts, that make the concrete individual central. It is a term with diverse but reconcilable definitions or interpretations of human existence. Existentialism can therefore be broadly accepted to mean the philosophy of human existence. It is concerned with the interpretation and description of existential issues and problems of human existence.

However, if 'existentialism' simply means the philosophy of human existence, then to trace it to the relatively recent 19th century writings of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche is to conclude that the concern of philosophy with human person and his existence is a recent phenomenon. But this is far from the truth. Indeed, existentialism is as old as philosophy itself. Some of the themes or trends (such as individualism, subjectivity, freedom, relativism, and autonomy), which are expressed in modern existentialism, are also to be found in the writings of earlier philosophers such as Sophists, Socrates, Epicurus, Rene Descartes, etc.

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[14] ibid

The Sophists

Traditionally. the term 'Sophists' refers to certain Greeks philosophers in the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. who became famous as itinerant teachers of logic, philosophy and rhetoric. Prominent among them are Protagoras (481-411 B.C.), Gorgias (480 B.C.), Hippias (43 B.C.) and Prodius (430 B.C.). They were popular for a doctrine which emphasizes empirical and individual knowledge as well as the ability to argue any case; irrespective of its objective truth. This implies that the Sophists took a significant interest in the knowing. willing and self-conscious subject, man.[15] The reason for their concern with the uniqueness of man is expressed in Sophocles' popular saying: "Miracles in the world are many; there is none greater than man."[16]

G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831) argues that the Sophists were subjective idealists whose doctrine was diametrically opposed to the thesis of the pre-Socratic philosophers who ignored the subjective, self-determining element in their approach to reality.[17] According to Edward Zeller, the Sophists were characterized by relativism and scepticism and a revolt against physical science.[18] Zeller is correct in his view because the Sophists, in various ways. disputed the possibility of certain objective knowledge which earlier philosophers thought was possible about external reality. For the Sophists, such knowledge is impossible and even if it is possible, it would not be within the capability of

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[15] J. A. Aigbodioh, *Scepticism and Humanism: An Interpretation of Hume Epistemology.* A Ph.D Thesis (University of Ibadan, Nigeria, 1993).

[16] F. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy: Greece and Rome.* Vol.1 (New York; Image Books, 1962).

[17] See G.W.F. Hegel as reported by C. B. Kerferd, "Sophists". In P. Edwards, ed, op. cit.

[18] ibid.

man to be certain of it. [19] Specifically, Gorgias took this kind of skepticism to the point of denying the existence of anything for certain. For him, nothing exists. If anything did exist, it would be unintelligible. If something were intelligible, one could say nothing about it." [20] This is an aspect in which the Sophists have significantly influenced existentialist philosophy because apart from their concern with individual concrete experience, they introduced a relativist approach to ethics and social phenomena. [2]

This relativist disposition of the Sophists was significantly popularized by Protagoras in his popular rendition, "man is the measure of all things – of what is and what is not, what is true and what is false." [22] This Protagorian principle of life is sometimes quoted as an early statement of humanism, human interests, and it is accordingly taken to recommend a kind of pragmatism, the view that a proposition is true if holding it to be so is practically successful or advantageous. [23]

Socrates (470-399):

According to Cicero (106-43 B.C.), 'Socrates was the first to call philosophy down from the heaven.' [24] By this, Cicero meant that Socrates was concerned almost exclusively with the human person and his conduct. Corroborating this view, Whitney Oates argues that Socrates' philosophical thought represents an orientation towards the inner nature of man's being, in sharp

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[19] J. A. Aigbodioh, op cit.

[20] C. S. Robert & K. M. Higgins, *History of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[21] M. Saifulin & R. R. Dixon, eds., *Dictionary of Philosophy* (Moscow Progress Philosophers, 1984).

[22] See Plato, *Theatetus Parmenides and Theatetus* (Chicago Ininois; Henry Regnery Co. 1951).

[23] C. S. Robert & K. M. Higgin, op cit.

[24] I. G. Kidd, "Socrates." In P. Edwards, op cit., Vol. 7 & 8.

contrast to the direction which (the Ionians) physical philosophers' thought took. Oates further argues that,

> *Socrates ... is a philosopher, a speculative thinker... who cuts directly across the general tendency of contemporary philosophising, and redirects its emphasis to the inner nature of man. From that time on, philosophy has always been concerned not only with the nature of the physical world, but also with man from the psychological, ethical and epistemological point of view. Consideration of the problem of value, the development of logic, investigation into the ways of knowing; all actually assume their proper significance after Socrates had made his astounding contribution of re-orientation.* [25]

Socrates' main reason for radical redirection of the focus of Greek philosophy from the cosmos to the human person is clearly explained by J. I. Omoregbe thus:

> *The human person is the most marvelous and most complex being in the universe. The marvels of the human person by far surpass those of the physical universe. Thus, there is a richer source of philosophy in the human person than in the physical universe.* [26]

Socrates' philosophical doctrine is mainly on the conduct of human person in order to guarantee a meaningful human existence. Socrates, for example, argues that in order to live a good life man's first requires his self-knowledge. He identifies knowledge with virtuen and argues that the obligation of man as a thinking animal is to ask questions about things and exempt nothing from his questioning. [27] To be sure, Socrates'

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[25] W. J. Oates, ed., "General Introduction" ,*The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers* (New York: Random House Inc, 1975).

[26] J. Omoregbe, *Knowing Philosophy* (Lagos: Joja Educational Research & Publishers Ltd, 1990).

[27] A. E. Avey, *Handbook in the History of Philosophy: A Chronological Survey of Western though 350 BC to the Present* (U.S.A.: Barnes & Noble Inc).

existentialist inspiration is expressed in his famous dictum
'Man know thyself' by which he meant that human beings should
always subject themselves and their existence to critical and
rational examination because the unexamined life is not worth
living.

Socrates' existentialist tendency also finds expression in
the philosophic doctrine of Epicurus (341-270 B.C.). Like
Socrates, Epicurus insists that the primary philosophical interest
is man. According to Epicurus, the aim of philosophy is practical
and the goal of life is happiness. Oates argues that what Epicurus
primarily sought to do in philosophy is "to rid man from certain
besetting fears of the gods which led to superstitions, enormities
and fear of death with all its concomitants." [28] According to
Epicurus,

> *Human biology and psychology are materialistic*
> *throughout. At death the personality disintegrates; there*
> *is no immortality, our aim should be to enjoy our*
> *existence. But this enjoyment must be of the kind that*
> *is appropriate to man... social life evolves for the mutual*
> *advantage of individual. Laws and institutions are the*
> *rules adopted by man for living together. There is*
> *nothing absolute about them. We follow rulers for our*
> *own satisfaction. Since individual happiness is the goal*
> *of living, the wise man will participate in public life as*
> *little possible in order to avoid its disturbing influences*
> *and to minimize his own obligation.* [29]

This indicates is that a typical Epicurean does not only believe
that human existence should be measured by pleasure, but that
the concrete human life should be the centre of all philosophical

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[28]   W. J. Oates, *The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers*, p. xviii
[29]   A. E. Avey, op. cit, pp 40-41.

activities. Consequently, the philosophy of Epicurus is aimed at enhancing the quality of human life and existence.

Medieval Philosophy

There are indicators of existentialism in the religious philosophies of the medieval period, spanning 13th to 18th centuries in the history of Western philosophy. The rise of Christian and Islamic philosophies was remarkable for their attempt to give human existence a meaning. Granted that Christian and Islamic philosophies were essentially characterized by the defence of faith and exaggeration of the divine or transcendental order of things, the question about the understanding of man and his existence featured prominently in the writings of some religious fathers and philosophers. For example, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) argues that man is a being composed of soul and body. To him, the soul is the 'form' of the body and is incomplete without it. Aquinas argues in support of immortality of man because according to him, at death the soul survives the body. And the highest good is happiness which is derived from the knowledge and the love of God. He further says:

> *Virtue consists of living in a way directed towards this end and expresses itself in the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity and in the cardinal virtues of prudence, courage temperance, and justice. Health, possessions and friends are essential means to happiness.*[30]

In his social theory, Aquinas perceived man as a social being who must live among other beings. For him, the rules for living together, which are commonly called the laws of the State, are important to maintain conditions for the highest welfare of man.

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[30] ibid., p. 100.

In the same vein, Aurelius Augustinus (354-430) was concerned with human existence. In his interpretation of human existence, he argues that man was created with free will to choose between alternatives and that the beginning of man's suffering, predicament can be traced to man's exercise of evil choice. [11] Augustinus believes that by Divine grace, the will of man can be made free to know the truth and be good. In fact, there is ample evidence to conclude that the activities of both Jesus Christ (51 BC-29 A.D.) and Mohammed (570-632), were principally motivated by the ontological concern to redeem man from complete annihilation Albert Avery argues that,

> *The Christian movement began not as a philosophical doctrine but as a practical way of living and as based upon an intuitive belief in the character of God as a benevolent ruler of the universe, expressing himself by incarnation in the human form of Jesus. The Gospel relates that Jesus, after a few years of teaching the doctrine of God and the obligation of kindness on to the part of man toward man, suffered crucifixion through the intrigues of the traditional Jewish leaders.* [12]

Similarly, the Islamic movement began with Mohammed's dissatisfaction with the moral conditions of man. Consequently, he "felt called to preach a new doctrine of one absolute God, Ruler and Judge of the world." [13]   It is for this reason that the doctrines of Christianity and Islam are significantly characterized by ethical teachings which centre on an attitude of sympathy for one's fellow men and more specifically, on the mitigation of human suffering and hopelessness.

The consequence of this is that man is, first and foremost, the immediate concern of religion. Hence Walter Kaufmann says

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[11]   ibid., p. 69
[12]   ibid., p. 49
[13]   ibid., p. 76

'religion has always been existentialist.'[34] But there has been a strong opposition against this viewpoint. Philosophers such as Nietzsche and Maurice Friedman perceive existentialism and religion as poles apart. Nietzsche perceives Christian religion, for instance, as antithetical to tenets of existentialism. Friedman further points out that::

> *It is true that religion has always been existentialist as Walter Kaufmann puts it, but this is only a half truth and is confusing if taken as a whole one. Religion has never been simply a detached observation for reality for its own sake Rather it has always been a way of life, a way of man, it has always stood in need, therefore, of existential verification in the lived life of man. On the other hand, through the dual need of expressing religious reality and handling it down, religion has inevitably produced many manifestations which have led in every opposite directions from man's concrete existence. Religion is neither an objective philosophy nor a subjective experience.* [35]

Religion emphasizes an abstract or imaginary ideal of the world at the expense of the individual person and his existential problems.

Rene Descartes, (1596-1650)

Apparently influenced by the new scientific thinking of early modern period in the history of Western philosophy, Descartes set out to revolutionize and reconstruct the foundation of philosophy in order that it would be firm, certain and devoid of doubtful speculations and abstractions. To achieve this, Descartes adopted the method of "withholding belief from what is not

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[34]   F. Friedman, *The Worlds of Existentialism A Critical Reader* (New York: Random House Inc., 1964), p. 7

[35]   ibid

entirely certain and indubitable in the criticism of the principles on which all ... beliefs rested."[36] This is commonly referred to as Descartes' methodic doubt.

Descartes' emphasis on subjectivity provides the basis for later developments in philosophy, including modern existentialism. The notion of subjectivity is central to existentialism. The word, 'subjectivity' has been variously used in philosophy. Traditionally, it refers to opinion or personal beliefs, rather than objective knowledge. This idea of subjectivity can be traced to ancient philosophers such as Plato, who often distinguished between genuine knowledge and mere opinion, even if the opinion turned out to be true.

There is another sense of subjectivity which simply means a "particular standpoint,what is called the first-person standpoint."[37] However, subjectivity, as it applies to Descartes, has general significant features, including its premium on interiority, introspection, the idea that the mind is an inner realm, mental-emotions, sensations, desires and all sorts of ideas.[38] This implies that Descartes' subjectivity is a powerful form of individualism and a defence of individual authority and autonomy. This can be said to have later formed the fulcrum of contemporary existentialism.

Nevertheless, the point remains that there is nothing significantly new about the themes or tendencies of modern existentialism because as one's historical excursion has shown, what contemporary existentialist philosophers may parade as unique to them has, at one time or the other, constituted the concern of some earlier philosophers. The consequence is that the Sophists, Socrates, Descartes, Epicurus as well as the religious fathers and philosophers can arguably be said to be precursors

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[36]   J. A. Aigbodioh, op cit., p. 65
[37]   C. S. Robert & K. M. Higgins, op cit. p. 184
[38]   ibid., p. 184

of the philosophy of human existence. They may be called 'existentialists' in the attenuated sense of the word without necessarily sounding anachronistic. As Friedman argues.

> *Insofar as any philosopher turned away from the really real in a separate metaphysical sphere of essence in favour of the greater reality of personal existence in the here and now, he stands for an existentialist trend within history of philosophy.[39]*

Yet, it is trivial and anachronistic to conclude that the Sophists, Socrates and other earlier philosophers are the fathers of modern existentialism for the simple reason of provoking a consciousness in philosophers to make the human person and his existence an immediate area or point of philosophical concern and analysis. In other words, while the general thrust of existentialism may be associated with the Sophists and other earlier philosophers' teachings, existentialism, as it is known today, became a deliberate focus only in the 19th century writings of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. The best way, however, to understand the background to modern existentialism is to consider it against that which it reacted to, as well as examine it against the background of what happened in the 19th century religious situation in Germany. Hence it is argued that modern existentialism is essentially a German intellectual creation or heritage.

While Socrates, for instance, reacted against a cosmological concern of ancient Greek philosophers, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and other forerunners of modern existentialism were provoked by what they regard as the worthlessness of traditional philosophy. According to Friedman,

> *Modern existentialism must be understood as occupying a very special place in the never ending dialogue that make*

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[39] ibid., p. 184

up philosophy. It grows out of German idealism - Kant,
Fichte and Hegel - and on the other hand; it is a 'reaction
against the universal historical approach of Hegel which
dominated European thought in the first part of nineteenth
century.'[40]

The reasoning here is that modern existentialism is simply a negation of the absolute idealism and abstract rationalization of classical philosophy. The reason for the literary revolt and its subsequent rejection of traditional philosophy is that in philosophical systems, such as Platonism, Hegelianism and the like, the individual person and his concrete existential problems are lost in an abstract or a universal ego.

The philosophies of Plato and Hegel are singled out by existentialist philosophers as falsifying man's understanding of reality because they shifted attention away from the concrete individual to abstract universals as well as from subjectivity. For example, the most significant feature of Plato's philosophy is its pervasive dualism. Plato argues that there is basically two modes of being, namely, the phenomenal realm otherwise called the sensible world, and the realm of the ideas or forms, non-spatial, non-temporal entities, which exist apart from the realm of phenomena. [41] While the phenomenal world is understood as non-permanent and fraught with changes, the ideal realm is the realm of performance and timelessness. Reality thus understood in the full Platonic sense is to be found only in the world of ideas while the phenomenal world gets such reality as it has in direct proportion to the degree in which it participates in the world of the ideas. Another way of stating this view would be that the universal is only real whereas, the particular is real only insofar as it participates in the universal.[42]

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[40] F. Friedman, op cit., p. 8

[41] ibid.

[42] W. Oates, op cit., p. xiv.

Plato further argues that there are ethical and aesthetic ideas such as truth, courage and beauty, which function as objective norms in the realm of value.[43] According to Oates, Plato conceives of ideas as hierarchically arranged and at their apex he placed the idea of the Good as the super-transcendent entity in the universe.[44] The consequence of Plato's philosophical scheme is that the individual person and his existential problems are not important since emphasis is on the transcendence or the abstract realm. Hegel on his own only helped to expand Plato's idea. Hegel's philosophy revolves around the idea of Absolute spirit, understood as the totality of being. For Hegel, the whole of reality is one single being. Reality or universe is seen by Hegel as the self-projection of the absolute spirit such that comic history is regarded as the process of the self-projection and self-development of the absolute entity. Hegel argues that the Absolute is a universal reason moving dialectically through eternity and embodying itself in the actual universe.[45] This implies that everything in the universe is a manifestation of the Absolute and part of the dialectical process of the Absolute's self-development. Hence, according to Hegel, there is nothing in the universe that is a self-contained entity. Nothing is a separate entity on its own. Also central to Hegel's philosophy is the idea that reality is rational by which, he means that it is only through reason we can gain understanding of the universe. As he puts it:

> *If existence is essential being, reason is real and reality is rational. And therefore; it is the task of philosophy to understand what is; for what is, is reason... if philosophy builds a world as it ought to be, such a world can indeed be realized but only in imagination, a plastic material on which anything can be impress. The task of philosophy is not to sketch an ideal world: on the contrary, we must say the task of philosophy is reconciliation with reality.*[46]

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[43] ibid

[44] ibid.

[45] ibid.

[46] C.S Robert & K. M. Higgins, op cit.

It is discernible that there is no problem of existential thinking in Hegelianism since an individual, as far as Hegel is concerned, is anything but an agent of an objective dialectical process. It is this kind of abstract postulation that modern existentialism is contrasted with. Indeed, the literary opposition and attack on Hegel's dialectical system is directed against his attempt to absorb the whole of reality "not only in its essential but also in its existential and especially its historical aspect into the dialectical movement of 'pure thought.'[47] The traditional idea of identifying reality or being with the objects of thought was perceived by Soren Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, for example, as a great threat to personal human existence. Indeed, this singular standpoint marks the starting point of modern existentialism. Corroborating and amplifying this view, Paul J. Tillich argues that the distinctive way of philosophising which today calls itself existentialism or 'existential philosophy' emerged as one of the major currents of German thought in sharp criticism of the reigning rationalism or panlogism of the Hegelians.[48]

Kierkegaard and Nietzsche are regarded as the fathers of modern existentialism to the extent that they were the first philosophers to emphasize man's 'existence,' having criticized traditional philosophy, especially Hegelian idealism on account of its collectivist and objectivist tones as well as its abstract logical system. Hence, in Mary Warnock's view, the works of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche could be said to be the 'ethical' origin of existentialism.[49] Both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, in different ways, revolted and abandoned the rational and universal standard of morality, while insisting with Kant on the creative aspect of the will, that is, on the view that only acts of will create everything, which can be valued to be either high or low.

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[47] See G. W. F. Hegel as reported by P. Tillich, *American Philosophy in The Twentieth Century,* P. Kurtz, ed. (New York: Macmillan Company. 1968)
[48] ibid..
[49] ibid.

Kierkegaard argues that logical or conceptual mediation. i.e. the possibility of merging the opposition between thesis and antithesis into an all-embracing rational synthesis, is impossible. Against Hegelian holism which synthesized all of humanity, nature. God into a single 'spirit". Kierkegaard insist on the primacy of the individual and the profound otherness of God.[50] A significant feature of Kierkegaard's philosophy is its emphasis on the individual and subjective truth. According to C.S. Robert and K.M. Higgins.

> *The notion of subjective truth was polemically formulated in opposition to the idea that all such choices have a rational or 'objective' resolution. In choosing the religious life, for example, Kierkegaard insists that there are no untimely rational reasons for doing so, only subjective motives, a sense of personal necessity and passionate commitment. Similarly, choosing to be ethical-which is to say, choosing the principle of practical reason is itself a choice which is not rational.[51]*

What can be understood from this is that Kierkegaard wants recognition for the individual, his passion, free choice and self-definition in a 'traditional world' where being reasonable is the rule, whereas passion and commitment are exceptions.

The under-estimation of traditional philosophy also finds expression in Nietzsche's radical philosophy. For Nietzsche, the traditional philosophy of Christianity should be destroyed for projecting the view that another world – Christian heaven or the world of ideas – is more important than the real world. Nietzsche's philosophy is best understood against the religious bankruptcy of his day. In that milieu, Nietzsche did not waste

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[50] See Mary Warnock as cited by C. Agulanna, "A Critical Examination of Albert Camus' Philosophy of Absurdity.," M.A Dissertation (University of Lagos), pp. 13-14

[51] See Kierkegaard as reported by C. S. Robert & and K. M. Higgins, op. cit., p. 226

time to pronounce the 'death of God', which according to him must be accepted to mankind; upon which to build a new conception of human existence and value. Nietzsche attacked the rational foundation and basis of morality including Christian morality. He depicts philosophers of absolute morality, like Socrates, Plato, Hegel and so on, as enemies of life inasmuch as absolute morality is, itself, the enemy of life, hindering the development of the individual. To be sure, Nietzsche does not believe in objective moral values or religious values. He sees all values as man's creation, expressing a certain perspective. In this context, Nietzsche argues that in moral evaluation asking for reasons,

> *Upsets the unconscious sureness of instinct... any stable prosperity of life requests that some things indiscernible: analysis kills, abstraction ignores historic individuality. Therefore the desire for a reasoning virtue is not reasonable.*[52]

It is important to state that contemporary existentialist philosophers evolved and developed their philosophical thoughts from the Kierkegaard–Nietzsche's standpoint and criticism of traditional philosophy. Consequently, modern existentialism is holistically the antithesis of traditional philosophy. This dialectical distinction finds expression in some of the features which distinguish or set existentialism apart from traditional philosophy. These features include (i) existentialism takes the concepts of being, subjectivity and freedom as the defining features of philosophy, whereas, traditional philosophy expresses the philosophy that we may now call essentialism; (ii) while traditional philosophers tend to consider philosophy as a science and try to produce principles of knowledge that would be objective, universally true and certain, existentialist philosophers reject the method of science as being improper for philosophy.

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[52] ibid.

In fact, the existentialist philosophers argue that objectixe universal and certain knowledge is an unattainable ideal. Diagrammatically or schematically, [53] we might compare traditional philosophy with existentialism thus:

Traditional philosophy	Existentialism
Abstract ← →	Concrete
Universal ← →	Particular
Speculative ← →	Praticals
The Idea (concept) ← →	The Individual

This is the same thing as saying that the difference between traditional philosophy and existentialism is captured in the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity. Against this backdrop we can conveniently say that modern existentialism typifies a negation of absolute idealism and abstract rationalization of classical philosophy. This claim is axiomatic, given our analysis so far. However, to ask about the reason(s) for the renewed philosophical interest and concern with the problem of the issue of human condition since 19th century, is to speak about the motivations for the development of modern existentialism.

As our analysis has showed, it is not strictly true to say that philosophical concern with human condition and his existence began in the 19th century. As we have indicated, existentialist tempers run through the writings of ancient, medieval and early modern philosophers. These philosophers concerned themselves with the task of understanding the human person or existence. There are certain historical motivations which provoked renewed and intensified concern with the meaning or otherwise of human existence since 19th century.

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[53] See Nietzsche as cited by G. A. Morgan, *What Nietzsche Means* (New York: Harper Torch Books. 1965).

These historical motivations arc largely responsible for the emergence of existentialism as a distinct and deliberate approach to philosophy.

Existentialism never developed to full flowering until after World War II. To this extent, it can be argued that while the first motivation can rightly be said to have resulted from the poverty of traditional philosophy, which, as we have noted, paid little attention to the unique personal concerns of individuals, it was the World War II that generated the fertile soil upon which existentialism blossomed. To be sure, the World War II exasperated wide spread feelings of despair and abandonment of an established order, thereby resulting in an unprecedented existentialist reflection and philosophizing. It has been correctly urged, that all historical events which show similar disregard for the feelings and aspirations of individuals are catalysts or motivating factors for the development of existentialism.

In this context, science and technology is a motivation, given that the subject of 'Being' and of personal existence has been absurd or extinguished by the overwhelming impact of scientific mode of thinking upon the contemporary mind.[54] The point of emphasis here is that human condition has deteriorated, following the unprecedented breakthroughs in science such that the human dimension of existence has been removed by technology which harnesses men to machines and requires them to work as organizational men who scarcely have any opportunity to express their existence as persons. In fact, the scientific reality of the day has created scepticism of a kind as to whether man is radically different from a machine or robot. What this implies is that the realization that whatever has been significantly achieved in the realm of science is at the expense of human values and existence which constitute a *raison d'etre* for existentialism in the 20th century post World War II.

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[54] There is a similar scheme in A. J. Lissaka, *Philosophy Matters* (London: Charlses E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1977), p. 488

Yet another possible motivation came from the rise or development of atheistic philosophy, especially Nietzsche's revolutionary philosophy. Other philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus have only reasoned with Nietzsche to deny the reality of existence of God amidst unmitigated human sufferings and ravaging influence of evil in human affairs. From this perspective, Sartre, for example, insisted on the proposition; 'Existence precedes essence.' He argues that "since the view of God was abandoned by the philosophic atheism of the 18th century, it is philosophically inconsistent to adhere to a view of human essence."[55] Hence Sartre says that the proposition 'existence precedes essence' is true for human beings. Sartre accordingly argue that the whole thrust of existentialism is nothing more than an attempt to draw the full implications from consistently atheistic position.[56]

The significant influence of atheism on the development of existentialism is poignantly put thus by Samuel Enoch:

Atheism had become an important cause of the problems that give rise to existentialism, since the breakdown of the religious tradition of Europe greatly aggravated the growing sense of life worthlessness and meaninglessness, some existentialists took a frankly atheistic position and drew out all the consequences of such a position in formulating their approach to life. Others turned; once again, to religion in order to rediscover there what they believe had been missed by rational and scientific thinkers.[57]

This means that existentialism evolved and developed in the face of absurdity, wars, suffering, pains, injustice, technology, etc, all of which signify a disregard for the feelings and aspirations of individuals. This view is especially true of the philosophies of Sartre, Unamuno and Camus. For example, Sartre's

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[55] S. E. Stumpt, *Socrates to Sartre: A History of Philosophy*, 2nd Ed. (New York: M-Graw Hill Book Company, 1975), pp. 461-463

[56] A. Lissaka, op cit., p. 499

[57] ibid.

existentialist thought was significantly influenced by the World War II during which there was the need for individual salvation in a crumbling world, and "Sartre believed that the solution lies in existentialism. a philosophy which advocated human freedom, choice and subjectivity over any abstract, objectivistic, rational procedure at solving human problems."[58]

In the same vein, Unamuno's philosophical thought is a significant reflection on the different turbulent political period in Spanish history. It was a time Spain suffered two political dictatorships, that of Gen. Primo De Rivera, from 1923 to 1930 and then that of General Francisco Fransco, from 1939-1975. The latter was preceded by three years of civil war (from 1936-1939), a prelude to World War II. Consequently, Spain suffered poverty, division and isolation coupled with ideological repression and poor cultural development. [59] Jose Mora argues that Unamuno is one important Spanish philosopher of the 20th century "who suffered in the flesh, some of the political vicissitudes of Spain's recent history and was forced into exile."[60] For Camus, apart from the harsh experiences of poverty and anguish. it was World War II, the savagery of the Nazi occupation of France as well as the counter-attacks of the French resistance movement that provided Camus with a deep sense of the absurdity of the human condition.[61]

From our examination of existentialism, it is plausible to perceive a continuing link of ideas between modern existentialist philosophers and philosophers of the old. It is within this purview that we perceive modern existentialism as 'a new wine in old bottle.' Modern existentialism, strictly speaking, cannot therefore claim purity of thought or identity in the history of western philosophy.

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[58]   S. E. Stumpf, op cit. p. 461

[59]   O Oyeshile, "Sartre's Ontology and the Subjectivity of the Individual," G. Ozumba, ed., *The Great Philosophers,* Vol. II (Calabar: Vitalis Books, 1997), pp. 183-184

[60]   J. F. Mora, *Three Spanish Philosophers Unamuno, Ortega and Ferrater Mora.* (New York: State University of New York, 2003), p. 1

[61]   ibid

[62] Lissaka, op cit., p. 516

PERNICIOUS PARALLELS: PLATONISM AND ARISTOTELIANISM

By
M. A. Adelabu

ABSTRACT

It is often said that in general philosophical orientation, we are all either Platonists or Aristotelians. And if we are Platonists, we tend to be collectivist, altruistic and romantic. If we are Aristotelians, we appear to be individualistic, egoistic, scientific and realistic. Plato is often seen as the contrary of Aristotle (two parallel lines). He is considered as the authoritarian, the elitist, the collectivist, the mystic and the idealist, Aristotle is portrayed as the democrat, the individualist, the empiricist and realist. Plato is also considered as the intellectual father of such philosophers as St. Augustine, Immanuel Kant and a whole succession of the idealists, romanticists and relativists. Aristotle on the other hand, is portrayed as the progenitor of such philosophers as Thomas Aquinas, John Locke and a whole succession of the realists, empiricists and absolutists.

Much as this paper agrees that history, as well as individual being, reflects this clash between Platonism and Aristotelianism, it submits, through dialectical analyses and arguments that the picture is superficial and overdrawn. It presents stereotypes of these great classical Greek philosophers and their ideas, and downplays the similarities and mergers (dialectical syntheses) of their thought. It also ignores the multidimensionality of their belief systems and stresses the extremes and generalizations. Great leaders, eminent politicians, notable professionals and craftsmen in history have fallen victim of this 'either-or' disposition. They have been dualistically oriented, gravitating naturally to one extreme or

the other. They neglect or overlook the many possible positions between contraries and this ultimately lead to their abysmal failings.

This work highlights the contradictory elements of the two great Greek philosophers and some of their followers, and demonstrates how they can be reconciled and synthesized to harmonise many of these ideas, stemming from both orientations, through the pre-Socratic philosophy of flux and paradox, exemplified by Heraclitus and the very similar dialectical philosophy of the eighteenth-and nineteenth-century German idealists represented by Hegel and others for man's intellectual enhancement, high sense of morality and leadership sagacity, for a better and harmonious society.

Introduction

If critically viewed, one will discover that the West's philosophic development in terms of essentials, three fateful turning points stand out. The two philosophers who, above all others, are responsible for generating the disease of collectivism and transmitting it to the dictators of our time are led by Plato; and the 'antidote' to them is Aristotle.

Plato, does indeed, symbolise a kind of collectivistic philosophy in which the elites control the masses. For Plato, the masses, as contrasted to their rulers, the 'Philosopher Kings' are slaves to the daily, personal concerns of life, bogged down in routine and unable to plug into mystic enlightenment through intuition or revelation. Therefore, their purpose is to obey orders and their virtue is in submitting themselves to the State.

Aristotle, by and large, opposes Plato's supernaturalism, intuition, revelation and mysticism. He denies the reality of a 'World of Forms' and upholds the reality of a 'World of Particulars' that we can perceive through our physical senses. Reality, according to him, is composed, not of Platonic

abstractions, but of concrete entities. Aristotle motion is a world of science, an orderly and intelligible world, knowable to human mind. The mystical elements of Plato's epistemology is vehemently denied by Aristotle. Therefore, it can be said that he is the father of logic and the proponent of reason – rather than intuition – as a way of achieving knowledge. He is also the real founder of empiricism, and a proponent of absolutes and objectivity, while Plato can be said to represent mysticism, intuitivism and subjectivity.

In the arena of ethics, Plato sees the good life as largely one of selflessness, of submerging the self in the ongoing collective, of placing society first and self second. It is basically an altruistic, even utilitarian morality that Plato espouses. It is a kind of pre-Christian morality of renunciation and self-denial. According to Peikoff, Plato would have us negate our own individuality in the name of union with the collective. Aristotle, on the other hand, places more emphasis on the individual – on a kind of rational self-pride and on the development and definition of individual's moral behaviour.[1]

The concepts exemplified by these two great philosophers buffeted each other during the classical period, then in the Middle Ages, Platonism, under the influence of such philosophers as Plotinus and Augustine, dominated the philosophical scene. But Aristotelianism emerged as a powerful force in the 13th century, largely through the efforts of Thomas Aquinas. In the Renaissance, there was the rebirth of the Aristolelian spirit which, in Western civilization, helped lead to the Age of Reason or the Enlightenment of the 18th century. Individualistic political philosophy arose in the thought of John Locke and others, and

[1] Leonard Peikoff, *The Ominous Parallels* (New York: Penguin Group, 1982).

the concept of freedom spread rapidly, culminating with the birth of the United States, a country of individualism and freedom.

Platonism, the winey buffeted Aristolelianism in the late 18th century, and the Age of Reason began to give way to idealism and Romanticism. Immanuel Kant was largely responsible for this. He was bent on bringing an altered form of Platonism back to the mainstream of the Western culture. Sounding much like Plato, he maintains that 'things-in-themselves' are not knowable and that reason cannot discover anything about reality. Faith, he holds, is the real key to reality. So, Kant denies happiness to make room for duty. For him, the essence of moral virtue is selflessness, obedience to duty without thought of consequences.[3]

It is an incontestable fact that life is a complex theoretical and practical phenomenon, filled with contradictory perspectives. Opposites abound in life; contraries or antinomies take charge, and like ideological magnets, pull us toward their poles. These ideological magnets are potent; they tend to enslave us and our thinking. They direct our fundamental orientations by classifying or simplifying, and by presenting alternatives in 'either-or' terms.

Many notable leaders, ideologists and thinkers, as well as their dogmatic and fanatical followers, tend to be either scientifically or artistically oriented; they are either dedicated to objectivity or to subjectivity, to theory or to practice, to conservatism or to liberalism, to rationalism or to intuitivism, to involvement or to neutralism, to individualism or to groupism, to egoism or to altruism, and so on. Many therefore, are often trapped or enslaved in this two-valued orientation, seemingly championed by Plato and Aristotle, and stemming from autonomic nature of language as well as from basic psychological proclivities.

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2   Ibid., p.31
3   Ibid., p.33

Often, such a dualistic entrapment, with a dedication to one extreme, is viewed by the victims as an indication of courage, commitment, integrity, or dedication – in short, a sign of 'standing for something', of being willing to take a position. It is seldom considered that this 'dedication' might be the stance of absolutism, dogmatism, or rigidity. It is certainly not the position of Heraclitus' philosophy of change, the dialectics of Hegel, or the 'both-and' multivalued orientation of Korzybskian semantics.

The world of ideological absolutism is a prison world. Leaders of honour, integrity and dynamism, or those who aspire to lead, as well as progress-minded followers, enslaved in it must constantly try to escape. To bring sophistication to their leadership roles, professional callings and general relationship with fellow human beings, they must recognize that reality is more complex than words usually make it, and it changes constantly, making the static language used to describe it inadequate and unsatisfactory.

It is, of course difficult, if not impossible, for any mortal to escape completely from the world of either-or, but escape should be the goal. No absolute single key unlocks this prison; man must therefore seek various keys for his freedom. Such keys are – the philosophy of flux and paradox exemplified by Heraclitus, and the Hegelian dialectics merged with the concept of moderation, represented by the Aristotelian Golden Mean. Such a new orientation will give victims a glimpse of a new world of multi-dimensionality and dynamism necessary for interpreting events and philosophising about ideas and concepts of effective leadership, professional excellence and high moral rectitude for a decent, harmonious, progressive and peaceful society for all.

St. Augustine: Christian philosophers were not left out of this dichotomy of ideas. St. Augustine was a Platonist Christian philosopher, who believed that the soul is the very essence of

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man. He defines man as a rational soul, using a mortal and earthly body.[4] Man, Augustine adds, is a soul in possession of a body. When man acquires knowledge, it is the soul, according to Augustine, that employs the body as an instrument to acquire such knowledge.

The soul, Augustine asserts, is an immaterial substance, which is superior to the body and cannot be acted upon by the body. He advances three Platonic arguments for the immortality of the soul. First, is the modification of Plato's who had argued that the soul is the principle of life and therefore, it cannot admit the contrary principle (death). Augustine's second argument is based on Plato's doctrine of Forms. The Forms are, for St. Augustine, eternal, immutable and indestructible truths, which are the objects of human knowledge. When the soul acquires knowledge, it is these eternal truths that it apprehends. The fact that the soul is able to come in contact with, and apprehend these truths, shows that it shares the same nature with them, that is, the soul itself is eternal, immaterial and indestructible. His third argument is based on man's natural desire for happiness. Man, Augustine points out, has a natural desire for perfect happiness. Since this desire is natural in man, then perfect happiness must be attainable; otherwise man would not have a natural and irresistible desire for it. But Augustine submits that since no man is ever perfectly happy in life, it follows, therefore, that it is after Death that this is attainable, it then means that there must be life after death[5]. Augustine places Plato above all other philosophers. All others are to give place to Plato. According to him: "Let Thales depart with his water, Anaxamenes with the air, the Stoics with their fire, Epicurus with his atoms."[6] These philosophers,

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[4]   F. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* (New York: Image Book, Publishers).

[5]   J.I. Omoregbe, *A Philosophical Look at Religion* (Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publishers Ltd, 1993)

according to Augustine, were materialists, Plato was not. All things, according to Plato, have their beings from God and from something immutable. For Augustine, Plato was also right by saying that perception is not the source of truth. He also holds with Plato, that the sensible world is inferior to the external.

St. Thomas Aquinas: Unlike St. Augustine, who is Platonic in his philosophical orientation and approach, St. Thomas Aquinas is a Christian philosopher of Aristotelian inclination. He follows Aristotle so closely that the stagyrite has, among Catholics, almost the authority of one of the Fathers; to criticize him in matters of pure philosophy has come to be thought almost impious.[7]

During Aquinas period, the battle for Aristotlelianism against Platonism was still gathering momentum. Aquinas influence secured the victory until the Renaissance. Then, Plato who became better known than in the Middle Ages, again commanded supremacy in the opinion of most philosophers. Aquinas was for six years, at Frederick He's University of Naples; then he became a Dominican and went to Cologne where he studied under Albertus Magnus, who was the leading Aristotelian among the philosophers of the time.

Unlike his predecessors, Aquinas has a really competent knowledge of Aristotle. His friend, William of Moerbeke, provided him with translations from Greek, and he himself, wrote commentaries. Until his time, men's notions of Aristotle had been obscured by neo-Platonic accretions. He, however, followed the genuine Aristotle's doctrine and disdained Platonism, even as it appears in St. Augustine. St Aquinas also succeeded in persuading the church that Aristotle's system was to be preferred to Plato's, as the basis of Christian philosophy.

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[6] Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (London: George Allan & Unwin Publishers, 1979).

[7] Ibid., p.31

One of the striking differences between the Platonian and Aristotelian traditions is their conception of the soul. We can see that the immortality of the soul is implied in the very conception of man or the soul in the Platonic tradition. But this is not the case in the Aristotelian system. In this system, the soul and the body are so inseparably linked and depend on each other for existence and survival. They both constitute one unified entity, one unified substance, not two separate substances as claimed by the Platonians.

Form and Matter are two constitutive elements of things. These elements are complementary, inseparable and mutually dependent. This is how Aristotle and his followers see the soul and the body in man. The soul is the Form, while the body is the Matter, both of which constitute the human person in a substantial and inseparable union. It is obvious that in Aristotelian conception of man, the soul cannot live without the body, since in the first place, it is not a separate substance but a constitutive element of a substance, which is the human person itself.[8] Therefore, there is no room for the immortality of the soul in the Aristotelian conception of man.

John Locke: A form of responsible individualism predicated on a love of reason and importance of 'natural law', was given an impetus in 17th century England by John Locke. He lived at a time when England was attempting great political reforms, seeking to attenuate the power of royalty, establish a Parliament, and secure religious freedom. Locke was a prime mover in these efforts – in both politics and philosophy.

Locke is generally considered as the leading philosopher of the Enlightenment. His ideas set the tone for many of the philosophers who followed, and it was Locke's love of freedom that so greatly influenced the founding Fathers of the American republic. Liberty is very paramount to Locke. He sees it as a

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[8]   J. I. Omoregbe, op. cit., p. 166

natural right that should not be abridged, except when it interferes with the liberty of another. Locke also sees government as a creation of, and servant of, the people, not the other way round, as Plato will make us believe. The considerable influence of such thinkers as Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine in early America and the philosophies of Voltaire and Montesquieu in France.

Locke, unlike the Platonists, who put social good above personal freedom. stresses the sanctity of the individual, the rule of law. checks and balances in government, and the rule of reason in human affairs. He believes that the mind is capable of finding the truth. He sees the need for maximum freedom for the individual if the mind were to work properly.

His *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* is particularly significant in the development of empiricism, a philosophy is significantly parallel to the continental rationalism of Descartes. It deals with the concepts of certainty and the extent of human knowledge and also touches on belief. assent and opinion relating to epistemological concerns. In his *Two Treatises on Government*, published the same year, Locke argues that there is no divine right of kings and that people are free and equal in their natural rights. These ideas had a great effect on both the American and French constitutions.

Like all empiricists, Locke believes that human knowledge derives from sense experience, and he denies that ideas are innate in the human mind. Locke maintains that human mind is a *tabula rasa* – a blank slate – written upon only by experience in the shape of reflections and sensations.

Notable Platonists and Aristotelians

Immanuel Kant: The tragedy of the West lies, however, in the fact that the seeds of Platonism had been firmly rooted in philosophy almost from the beginning, and had been growing steadily through the post-Renaissance period. Thus, while the revolutionary achievements inspired by Aristotelianism were reshaping the life of the West, an intellectual counter-revolution was at work, generally gathering momentum. A succession of thinkers was striving to reverse the Aristotelian trend and to resurrect the basic principles of Platonism.

The apogee of this development appeared in the late 18th century. The man who consummated the successful anti-Aristotelian revolution, who, more than any other, ended the Enlightenment and flung the gate open for its opposite, is the most influential German philosopher in history, Immanuel Kant. One of Kant's major goals was to save religion (including the essence of religious morality) from the attacks of science. His system represents a massive effort to raise the principles of Platonism, once again, to a position of commanding authority over Western culture.

Kant places his primary emphasis on epistemological issues. Kant's epistemological project is to wage war against human mind. Man's mind, he asserts, is incapable of acquiring any knowledge of reality. In any process of cognition, be it sense experience or abstract thought, the mind, according to Kant, automatically alters and distorts the evidence confronting it. It filters or structures the material it receives from reality in accordance with a set of innate and subjective processing devices, whose operation it cannot escape.

The orderly, spatiotemporal, material entities perceived by man therefore, is essentially a creation of his consciousness. What man perceives is not reality 'as it is', but merely reality as it appears to man, given the special structure of the human mind.

Therefore, for Kant, as for Plato, the universe consists of two opposed dimensions – true reality, a supersensible realm of 'things-in-themselves' (noumena) (in Kant's parlance, and a synonym of Plato's World of Forms), and the world of appearances which is not ultimately real; the material world which men perceive through their physical senses.

Kant's attack on reason, this world, and man's happiness, was the decisive turning point; as the main line of modern philosophy rapidly absorbed this basic tenets, the last elements of the Aristotelian approach were abandoned, particularly in Germany. Philosophers turned, as a group, to variants of Platonism; this time, an extreme, militant Platonism, a Platonism shorn of its last vestiges of respect for reason.

Heraclitean philosophy of flux and paradox: As far back as the 6th century B.C., Heraclitus had contended that 'opposition brings concord,' and 'out of discord, comes the fairest harmony.'[9] Certainly, Heraclitus was an ancient precursor of Hegel's thought concerning dialectics and change. Heraclitus also asserts that 'into the same rivers we step and we do not step.' He stresses coalescence and the sense of 'otherness'. Nothing, according to him, is exclusively this or that. Mergers are important essences and concepts are distilled into new essences that continue to change. 'It is one and the same thing,' he says. "to be awake or asleep, young or old. Always, the former aspect becomes the latter, and the latter again the former by sudden unexpected reversal."[10]

Like the General Semanticists of the 20th century, Heraclitus urges people to transcend the 'either-or' type of thinking and to recognize in each phase of experience a 'both-and' relationship. Certainly, the ideas of this ancient Greek thinker presaged the later dialectical philosophy of Hegel and the 'non-

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[9]   Wheelwright, 1968
[10]   Ibid., pp. 90 – 91

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Aristotelian' or 'multivalued' orientation of Alfred Korzybski's followers. Relativism has clashed with absolutism, flux with permanence. For Heraclitus, 'everything flows and nothing' abides, everything gives way and nothing stays fixed. Change, according to Heraclitus, is a friction between two ontological opposites or contraries. This conflict, Heralictus tells us, is the ultimate condition of everything. Tension is the ultimate and strife, which often follows tension, is a necessity for progress and is not to be avoided.

Heraclitus' thought, therefore harmonized with the underlying theme of this paper that reality (the world of things) is changing constantly – as are human ideas, concepts, ideologies, thoughts, etc – and that nothing can be absolutely this or that. The thought of this great philosopher merges with, and forms a foundation for a much later philosopher – Hegel (1770-831) – a German follower of Kant's idealism who resurrects the Heraclitean spirit of flux combined with a sophisticated concept of dialectical logic, and propels it in many directions into the 20th century.

The Hegelian Dialectics: Dialectical thinking is definitely not G.W.F. Hegel's invention. Apart from Heraclitus, philosophers, from time to time, had stressed the clash-and-fusion of concept of ideas and reality. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) dealt peripherally with dialectics, and his followers such as fellow Germans, Johann Fichte (1762-1814) and Friedrich von Schelling (1775-1854) added their own ideas about it. Then came Hegel, who synthesized the previous thinking on dialectics, expanded and refined it. In fact, Hegel's dialectical method represents the culmination of German classical philosophy and builds substantially on many of the great Greek philosophers of antiquity, from Heraclitus onward.

Everywhere, even in person's mind, we find a process of unfolding. This process, according to Hegel, is called dialectics,

or the principle of contradiction. Everything, Hegel adds, tends to clash and merge with the opposite. Development is everywhere, and it proceeds by the dialectical process. First, there is a thesis, then an antithesis – its opposite or contradiction. These two are at last reconciled in a synthesis which becomes another thesis, and the process begins again.

This, Hegel believes, is the process of nature and history. It also has a spiritual dimension, the development of consciousness, of discernment, of personality, of enlightenment. Reality, according to Hegel, is filled with contradictions or paradoxes (as Heraclitus calls them). Dialectical logic is needed to deal with this reality. Such a logic, according to George Novack, is the opposite of Aristotle's formal logic; it is the logic of movement, of evolution, of change. Reality is too elusive, too multi-sided, and too dynamic "to be snared in any single form or formula or set of formulas."[11]

Every condition of thought, every idea, and every world situation, according to Hegelian dialectics, leads to its opposite and then, united with it, forms a higher and more complex whole. In a sense, every idea and thing has within it the seeds of its own destruction. This dialectical movement infuses everything that Hegel wrote. Basically, according to Hegel, the truth is an organic unification of opposites. There is a continuous fusion or synthesis of opposites or oppositions, brought about by merging and reconciliation, and from the clash comes a new idea or creation.

Instead, Hegel makes it the keynote of his concept of reality and his system of logic. A thing is not only itself, but something else. X is not merely equal to X, it is also equal to non-X. Alfred Korzybosky, stressed the same idea in the 20th century, just as Heraclitus had emphasized it in the 6th century B.C

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[11] Novack, 1971

Hegelian dialectics, in a sense, asserts that everything is opposite. The either-or is not realistic; everything has opposition within it. Processes are always contradicting themselves as they develop, and contradictions are what move the world. The reasonable person, stresses Hegel, is the one who is not welded to an extreme or absolute position but recognizes that a new truth will emerge from clash of positions. Dialectics, according to him, is the process of moving out of and into contradictions or oppositions. Development, he notes, is inherently self-contradictory, and everything generates within itself a force that leads to its demise, to its negation – its passing away into another (and higher) form.

Critically observed, it would be discovered that the philosophies of the two great thinkers are neither absolute nor mutually exclusive. They are interwoven and, not in any way, an either-or mode of thinking as many would like us imbibe. There are elements of dialectical logic in their thought systems being ignored by those who treat Platonism and Aristotelianism as two parallel lines that have no possibility of meeting at any point. Plato was more than a Platonist; despite his mysticism, he was also a pagan Greek. As such, he exhibited a certain authentic respect for reason, a respect implicit in Greek philosophy no matter how explicitly irrational it became. Although Aristotle's writers are polemical against the more extreme features of Plato's collectivism, he (Aristotle) himself is not a consistent advocate of political individualism. His own politics is a mixture of statist and antistatist elements.

These philosophers' non-fanatical followers are far from being absolute or extremist in their systems. For example, Kant who made possible the sudden mushrooming of the Platonic collectivism in the modern world, and especially in Germany, is not a full-fledged statist. He accepts certain elements of

individualism. St. Augustine, despite his pro-Platonic philosophical stance, modifies Plato's first argument on the immortality of the soul. Plato argues that the soul is the principle of life and as such, it cannot admit the contrary principle (death). By this, Plato seems to imply that the soul is God, which did not derive his life from another being. But as a Christian, St. Augustine could not hold such a new. For him, God alone is the principle of life, since He alone is the source of life. The soul he stresses, participates in life and derives its very being and essence from the principle of life (God). Since God, the principle of life, cannot admit the contrary principle (death) and what the soul derives from God is precisely life itself. It follows that the soul too cannot admit the opposite (death). The soul therefore is by its very nature, immortal. This is a dialectical logic in action in Augustine's system.

St. Aquinas' conception of man is basically Aristotelian, but with some modification. He agrees with Aristotle that the soul and the body constitute one substance, that is, the human person. And that the soul is the *Form* while the body is the *Matter* of this substance. But Aquinas argues however, in an unAristotelian manner for the immortality of the soul. Here, he parts way with Aristotle and pitches his tent with Plato, St. Augustine and other Platonists. This, again, is dialectics at work, this time, in Aquinas' philosophy.

Conclusion

Unlike the dialectical minded apostles of Platonism and Aristotelianism, the modern fanatical adherents of the philosophical systems of Plato and Aristotle think that by taking extremist stands, they are being courageous, when, in fact, they are being foolhardy. They see their convictions as necessary, when, in fact, they are no more than biased sophistry. They see

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their iconoclasm as helpful. when it is often simply confusing and debilitating.

As the General Semanticists have stressed, this paper agrees fully that thoughtful leaders, public officials, ideology adherents, professionals, intellectuals must shun the two-valued orientation – the either-or way of thinking. In the dialectical thought process, individualism merges with communitarianism, egoism with altruism, religious sensitivity with scientific concern, rationalism with emotivisim, legalism with consequentialism, and absolutism with relativism.

No person is a secluded atom, and each individual needs the cooperation and company of others. We must always veer away from the extreme road that leads to anarchy and nihilism. and travel the moderate path of respect for society. In like manner, communitarians must not lose sight of the importance of the individual. They must travel the moderate road of responsible use of their influence and powers, avoid stumbling into mass conformity or sinking into authoritarianism, which is antisocial and antithetical to the progress of society.

Stressing the similarities or mergers (dialectical syntheses) and the multidimensionality of these great classical Greek philosophers' belief systems will do society a lot of good. Stereotyping, overdrawing and painting superficial parallel picture of their ideas will be scandalous and ominously dangerous.

THE NIGERIAN JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY
Vol. 22, No.2, 2007

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HUMANISM AND THE INADEQUACIES OF RELIGION

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ABSTRACT

The paper exposes the adequacies of religion; i.e. the inherent problems and difficulties in the fundamental assumptions of religion and the antimonies arising from human manipulation of religion. Resulting from the problems inflicted on humanity through religion, the paper argues that humanism is a better, and plausible alternative in rescuing contemporary Africans out of their precarious conditions. While appraising religion vis-à-vis its contributions and proliferation in Africa, the paper establishes that religion has negatively affected the continents' development prospects. The paper explores possible objections to humanism, and concludes that humanism has more prospects and viability over the promises of religion in the 21st century Africa.

Introduction

Religion is the faith and belief in a divinely created order of the world. It is the doctrine that expresses the belief in the existence of a living God and perhaps other spiritual beings (gods) and how the creeds associated with such belief shape human way of living and conduct. Religion is not a new phenomenon in the history of ideas. While its origin is of time immemorial, religion has developed into various forms with different issues and problem arising therefrom. Pertinent and of immediate concern to us amidst these plethora of problem is the simmering controversy surrounding the plausibility and acceptability of

theistic religious claims and assumptions. While a detailed outline of the nature of this problem will be attempted in the course of the paper, it is pertinent from the outset to point out that as a result of the problems with religion; many people (scholars and philosophers inclusive) have been led to accept agnosticism in place of theism. Others have chosen to thread the path of atheism. In recent times, humanism has emerged as a dominant force against the content and claims of religious theism.

The Idea of Humanism

As an organized philosophical system humanism is relatively new. Nevertheless its origin can be traced to the ideas of classical Greek philosophers such as the Stoics and Epicureans as well as in Chinese Confucianism. [1] These philosophical views looked to human being, rather than gods or God to solve human problems. Humanism is an approach to life that accepts human responsibility and endeavour in the shaping of individual, society and global existence.[2] For humanists, man and his interests broadly conceived, constitute the epi-centre of their concern. The intention is to safeguard human interest through developing human freedom and ideals. These ideals and interests are varied as in the economic, political, socio-cultural, legal and moral. It includes the system that function to make the ideals and interests possible. Humanism enjoins man to put his trust in nothing spiritual but himself and others in face of human challenges.

The core of secularist humanism, according to Otakpor, is that human life is of itself neither purposeful nor purposeless, but that people give meaning to their lives because of the way they act and

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[1] F. Maduabuchi Dukor, *Theistic Humanism; Philosophy of Scientific Africanism* (Lagos: Chimah and Sons Productions, 1994).

[2] Leo Igwe, "Humanism in Africa: Challenges and Prospects in the 21st Century," *AAH Examine: The Newsletter of African Americans for Humanism.* vol. 11, Spring, 2001.

think, which is their choice.[3] Humanists are secularists who believe that people have a right to self-determination and therefore manage their own lives without interference from gods, and the repressive laws of spiritual order. Wole Soyinka writes: "Humanism for me represents taking the human entity as the centre of world perception, of social organization and indeed of ethics, deciding in other words what is primarily of the greatest value for humans as opposed to some remote extra terrestrial or ideological authority."[4]

Secular humanism is an avowed commitment to the promotion of human dignity, and interests, and the amelioration of the human condition in all its ramifications through human efforts. The basic elements and principles of secular humanism according to the "Declaration of the Council for Secular Humanism" are:

(i)   A conviction that dogmas, ideologies and traditions, whether religious, political or social must be weighed and tested by each individual and not simply accepted on faith.

(ii)   Commitment to the use of critical reason, factual evidence, and scientific methods of inquiry, rather than faith and mysticism, in their seeking solution to human problems and answers to important human questions.

(iii)   A primary concern with fulfillment, growth and creativity for both the individual and human kind in general.

(iv)   A constant search for objective truth, with the understanding that new knowledge and experience constantly alter our imperfect perception of it.

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[3]   Nkeonye Otakpor, "The Architectonics of Secular Humanism", *The Nigerian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 10, nos.1&2, 1999, p.45

[4]   Wole Soyinka, "Why I am Secular Humanist", *Free Inquiry*, Fall, vol. 17., No.4, 1977, p.48.

(v)   A concern for this life and a commitment to making it meaningful through better understanding of ourselves, our history, our intellectual and artistic achievements, and the outlooks of those who differ from us.

(vi)   A search for viable individual, social and political principles of ethical conduct, judging that on their ability to enhance human wellbeing and individual responsibility.

(vii)   A conviction that with reason, an open market place of ideas, goodwill and tolerance, progress can be made in building a better world for ourselves and our children.[5]

Therefore, we can define humanism as a wordview which centres upon human concerns, employing rational and scientific methods to address issues of importance to humanity. While it is at odds with faith based religious systems on many issues, it is dedicated to the fulfillments of the individual and humankind in general. To accomplish this end, secular humanism encourages a commitment to a set of principles, which promote the development of tolerance and compassion and an understanding of the method of science, critical analysis, and philosophical reflection.[6]

The Relevance of Religion

Religion is vital to moral development, which is a very critical index in national development. Religion reinforces moral development. There are moral norms in the scriptural texts of religions like Christianity and Islam which put a restrictive

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[5]   A Secular Humanism Declaration, issued by The Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism (now known as The Council for Secular Humanism, 1980).

[6]   J. Hoogstad, "Humanism, what is it?" *Humanist Inquirer*, March, 2001, p. 3.

sanction on the tendency to kill through injunctions such as "thou shall not kill".

Religion internalizes some of the moral norms necessary for harmonious social living. Religion, through such acts as miracles, has succeeded where science, technology and human efforts have failed in finding solutions to some human problems. Through revelation and spirituality, there have been solutions to some foreseeable moral problems. There are testimonies of spiritual interventions and breakthroughs in medical problems like cancer, blindness, HIV/AIDS, etc. Religion has been a good source of inspiration to man, especially in moments of troubles and tribulations. It has provided succour to the psychologically aggrieved, and given hope to the down-trodden. In moments of crisis, especially natural disasters and national crisis, religion is often resorted to for restoration.

Religion has been instrumental to the development of institutions like schools, universities, hospitals, NGOs and other community development projects. It has generated employments for people, and fundamentally, fosters unity among people from diverse and different cultural backgrounds. The spirit of brotherhood encouraged by religion guarantees social harmony and the dignity of human person. Religion is however not without shortcomings that are inherent in its assumptions and beliefs; some of which are product of human manipulation.

The Inadequacies of Religion

Secular humanism is overtly an anti-thesis of religion. It presupposes that theism or theistic religions are irrelevant and fraught with serious problems. Some of the arguments of secular humanism will be outlined. It is difficult to credit any one religion as being or any one God as since there have been so many throughout human history. None have any greater claim to being

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more credible or reliable than any other. Each religious group have its defenders and adherents. Theists, whether classical or non-classic il. often claim that their gods or God are perfect beings. They describe gods or God, however, in contradictory and incoherent ways. Numerous characteristics are attributed to their gods (God) some of. and combinations of which are impossible. For instance, in Christianity or Islam, God is conceived to posses infinite and perfect attributes such as holiness, omniscience, omnipresence, etc. It is unlikely that a being with these perfect features, i.e. having all these features together in Him without some contradictions could possibly exist.

No religion is consistent in its doctrines, ideas and history. Religious claims are sometimes contradictory to one another. However, these ought not to be because religion is conceived of to be a product of divinely created and sanctioned system which should be perfect. Given this, the state of religion in the world today is more consistent with the premise that they are man-made institutions (because there is no problem if man-made institutions are contradictory, since to err is human).

In most regions, God or god(s) is conceived to be the source of all morality. For most believers, religion represents an institution for promoting perfect morality. In reality, religious adherents, especially religious leaders are responsible for acute immorality, even though, they pretended to be acting in good faith through their religious preaching. Besides, God or god(s) to whom adherents are loyal, have characteristics or histories which make them worse than the immorality of man. No one would tolerate such behaviour on the part of a person, but with God or god(s), it is laudable since it is divinely sanctioned.

Closely associated with the above is the fact that there is so much evil in the world today. If there is any God or god(s), why do they not act to eliminate it. The absence of substantive action

against evil would be consistent with the non-existence, or at least indifferent with the gods, which altogether, is not impossible. Most religions claim that God or the god(s) loves, and that He is powerful. Human suffering makes such claims and even the existence of God implausible.[7]

Faith is a common characteristic of religions. Belief in the existence of gods (or God) and in the truth of religious doctrines rest on faith. But this is neither founded upon, nor defended by logic, reason, evidence or science. Faith is an unreliable guide to reality or means of acquiring knowledge. Theistic religions promote superstitions, and until superstition is banished, society cannot develop. However, the success of the scientific attitude is predicated on the ability to cultivate the seeking-spirit, the questioning theistic attitude and replacing the culture of belief with the culture that bring about development. Faith in theistic-religions gives false consolation in moments of tough challenges.

Most religions say that life is much more than the flesh and matter that we see around us. In addition there is supposed to be some sort of spiritual or supernatural realm behind our 'true self' that are spiritual, not material. All evidence, however, point to life being a purely natural phenomenon, indicating that man is material and dependent upon the working of the brain. If this is case then religious and theistic doctrines are wrong.

Why does the theist disbelieve in all other gods (God) outside his/her own belief systems? One possible answer is that there is absence of good reasons for doing so. In a way, this could be a plausible reason for not believing in any gods or God at all and eventually leaving whatever theistic and religious beliefs a person might have had in the past.

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[7] A. Adeolu, *Religion and National Development* (Lagos: Classical Press, 1999), p.6.

Karl Marx described theistic religion as the opium of the people. What this means is that it can liberate or enslave. It is capable of bringing relief and salvation. In the same vein, it can also bring intoxication and dreadfulness. Depending on the dosage that is imbibed, religion can heal or it can kill. But as a sacred institution, theistic religions should not be opium.

Religions preach peace and tolerance in theory. However, in matching theory with praxis, it becomes obvious that they are the bane of intolerance; they promote bigotry and fanaticism; and breed fundamentalists that threaten peaceful social order. Recent historical events have linked religious fundamentalism with terrorism.

Much Scholastic erudition attempt to prove God's existence yet conclusive arguments proving the existence of such spiritual beings and Being are not valid. This is a limitation to the plausibility of theistic religions.

Bolaji Idowu once noted that Africans are incurably religious.[8] Many African States are secular in their constitutions, however, most Africans are adherents of one religion or the other. Religions in Africa, particularly Islam and Christianity, which are the major ones have been characterized with polarization and unprecedented proliferation. They have not been able to recognize their common problems and their stakes in the development of a human community. This polarization of religions, the proliferation of different sects and movements in these religions ought to have been a laudable avenue for religion to contribute to the processes of social development in the continent. However, what is evident is the poverty and social irrelevance of these religions. The traditional religions are not any better. Rather than assist in the struggle for the creation of a

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[8] J. C. Murray, *The Problem of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p.89.

humane society, they have, in various ways, become obstacles to freedom. Consequently, they undermine the very conditions without which they cannot realize their core objectives and values[9].

The core values of religion, according to Segun Oladipo are self-realization and social harmony. Self-realization is a condition of existence (or a state of being), which is guided by a longing for,[10] or a desire for the discovery of the ideal possibilities of human life.[11] The quest for self-reliance has to be informed by another value, which is the desire to live in harmony with fellowmen. Spiritual union with the supernatural order (Being) becomes difficult, (or impossible) without a realization of these core values of religion.

The African experience shows that these values are least realized. Prominent instead is a history of religious rascalism, unrest and entrenched fanaticism. Religious fanaticism has manifested not only in religious wars and upheavals that had resulted in loss of innocent lives, valuable property and general social disorder, with economic and other social consequences. Religious fanaticism has continued to be a threat to human rights in Africa. Religion has aided political instability instead of promoting social re-engineering in Africa. It is a 'money-making venture'. Even though, there are traces of some institutions, social services and other comforting roles that are being provided by religion, religion has largely negatively affected the continent's development prospect.

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[9] Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (London: SCM Press, 1978), p. 1.

[10] Segun Oladipo, "Religions and Human Rigjhts", *Journal of Philosophy and Development.* No. 1, vols. 1& 2, 1995, p. 83.

[11] I. Radhakrishman, *An Idealist View of Life* (London: George Allen and Union, 1980), p. 69.

What role is now left for religion? Is religion doomed to attrition? Will it be relegated to the background? What will be the possible consequences of doing so? The fear of theists is that religion is too important to be discounted, relegated or eliminated in such a manner by humanists. Theists are surely justified in lamenting, but by opposing secular humanism, they make an error. Instead of attacking humanism for exposing the poverty of religion and thereby seeing them as opposing ideological camp, theists should instead take a closer look at the arguments posed by secularists and assess why religion might be worth ignoring. Some of the alleged attacks on secular humanism are worth considering first before we provide a philosophical defense.

It is argued that humanism is a monolithic dogma which tries to indoctrinate and convert people to the acceptance of the ideals of humanism.[12] This allegation needs immediate response. There is no central authority and no process for indoctrinating or converting people to secular humanism. People come to humanism by curiosity and reasoning. Some argue that secular humanists have no morals. This is based on the ground that morality is a product of religion and since humanists are outspoken against any form of theistic religion, the conclusion is drawn that they have no morals. This conclusion is unfounded. Secular humanists have a sense of morality; however, it is neither a product of religion nor validated by religious authority. It comes from humanity and natural world. It is our human values that give us rights, responsibilities and dignity not supernaturalism. Humanists believe that morality is crucial in human society and it is designed to bring out the best in people. They believe that people create their own meaning and purpose in life. The value and significance of life derive from how we

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[12] Matt Cherry and Matsumura Molleen, "10 Myths About Secular Humanism", in *Free Inquiry*, vol. 18, No. 1, 2000, p. 3.

live. This is to live a life that is free from some supposed transcendent realm. In fact to them, the meaning of life is to live a life of meaning. This is the ethics of humanism.

In some quarters, it is alleged that humanism is a religion.[13] Humanism is not a religion by any definition. There are no supernatural beliefs, no creeds that all humanists are required to accept, and no sacred texts are required.[14] Humanists are not expected to have 'faith' in what is said by authority, living or dead, human and supernatural. Humanism is a naturalistic non-religious worldview. Fundamentally related to this categorization of humanism as a religion is the argument that secular humanism worships humankind In other words, humanism replaces God with man. This conception seems to arise from a tendency among many Christians who assume that other religions and worldviews have a structure and content that parallels Christianity. That is, since 'Christians' worship 'Christ', then 'humanists' must worship the 'human'. This is a mistaken assumption, humanism is not a religion and humanists do not worship anything.

At the crux of the attacks is the view that humanists believe that all things in nature should be subjugated to human desires and interests. Secular humanists are therefore guilty of speciesm.[15] Speciesm is giving concession to human interests alone, over and above, at the neglect of other organisms that man shares nature with. This argument appears quite strong. While individual humanists differ on how much emphasis they place on the welfare of other species, humanists generally accept that *homo sapien* evolved by the same natural processes as every other natural species. They do not regard humans to be the result

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[13] Otakpor, op. cit., p.52

[14] Leo Igwe, "Humanism in Nigeria", *AAH: Examiner, The Newsletter of African Americans for Humanism,* vol. 9, No.1, Spring, 1999, p.1

[15] Jeffrey Olen & Barry Vincent, *Applying Ethics* (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992), p.3

of a special creation, separate from the rest of the animal world. This naturalistic humanists approach is a much better basis for understanding that humans have a moral responsibility towards the rest of the natural world, than the Biblical and Quranic views that humans 'have a dominion over every living thing that moveth upon the earth'.

The predominance of religion especially Christianity and Islam in modern world has brought with it the idea of salvation. Man's soul, it is argued, needs to be saved from eternal damnation after death. To guide against this calamitous consequence, the conclusion is usually made – 'accept Jesus as your lord and saviour' or 'accept Prophet Muhammed (S.A.W) and Allah to have eternal paradise' by these religions. Given the intensified acceptance of this believe in salvation, it may be argued that humanism holds no such prospects and for that reason, would it not be better to be religious? One good way of refuting this argument is that it may be possible that religionists are rewarded in the life after death for their faith, but, this does not foreclose the possibility that the humanists who neither believe in these religious claims nor in the existence of God, will be rewarded in the life after death if it turns out to be real for their intellectual honesty and consistency. Having vitiated the veracity of the supposed attacks on secular humanism, let us now provide a philosophical defense of humanism in Africa.

From the foregoing, it is resonant to defend humanism in order to rescue contemporary society from her present precarious conditions, occasioned by religions. Humanism has provided an impetus for humans to solve their problems with intelligence and perseverance, to conquer geographal and social frontiers, and to extend the range of human exploration, adventure together with responsibilities. Being resolutely aware of the profound strangeness and absurdity of the non-human phenomena in human affairs and interests, in secular humanism man is attempting to re-relate to himself and to inscribe human affairs, and interested in giving man overwhelming power over

his own being. Insofar as its purpose is to persuade men to accept self-responsibility humanism is eminently moral. Man is not God nor does religion have to solve man's problem.[16] The reality and acceptance of this responsibility, does not entail absurdity and ethical limitation as contended by critiques.

The strength of humanism is in its emphasis on, and commitment to free inquiry. Humanism opposes tyranny over the mind of man: it opposes efforts by ecclesiastical, political, ideological, or social institutions to shackle free thought. Free inquiry entails recognition of civil liberties. It requires that we tolerate diversity of opinion and that we respect the right of individuals to express their beliefs, even though they may be unpopular. This should be without violence, social or legal prohibitions or fear of sanctions.[17]

Humanism believes in the separation of religion and State. It encourages a pluralistic, open and free democratic society; disregarding imposition of an exclusive parochial conception to truth, piety or virtue upon society. The secularization of the State will avoid giving any religion a dominant position, while the minority opinions are in jeopardy.

As atheists or agnostics secular humanists do not find sufficient evidence for the claim that some divine purposes exists for the universe.[18] They argue that man is responsible for his own life and need not be transcendent for salvation. Nor should he live an ethical life because of immortality, reincarnation, salvation or other eschatological ends. Religions have offered comfort to the bereaved and dying by the promising immortal life. Religion has also aroused morbid fear and dread. Though man has found theistic religion to be uplifting and a source of solace in times of trouble, yet it is arguable that religions have

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[16] Tom Flynn, "Is Humanism a Religion? Does it Matter", *Free Inquiry*, Vol .5,No 4, 1995, p. 7.

[17] Hoosgstad, op. cit., p. 5.

[18] J. Lactroix, *The Meaning of Modern Atheism* (London: Methuen, 1989), pp. 41 - 42.

been fanatical, narrowing human hopes, limiting aspirations, precipitating wars, violence and terrorism.

Humanism is committed to the use of the rational method of inquiry in creating a good life for all individual's; a peaceful society where fairness, tolerance, justice, happiness and democracy will reign and take dominance over the false consolation, faith, promises and idiosyncrasies of theistic religions.[19] Humanism believes that the scientific method, though imperfect, is the most reliable way of understanding the world. While opposed to the abuse of misapplied technology and its possible harmful consequences for the natural ecology of human environment, secular humanism advances with culture and ethical values.[20] While placing trust in human intelligence instead of supernatural reliance, secular humanism promotes a culture of education, enlightenment and progressiveness. Mankind should avail itself of the benefits and promises of humanism over and above religion.

Conclusion

Insights from, and promises of humanism indicate that religion, in whatever form, can nolonger be the sole basic reference for thought. Humanism is highly important for to ignore it is to abandon human civilization. On the African experience, humanism suggests itself as the worldview to turn to in order to secure development. The principles, tenets, and values of humanism hold the prospect for a better human world, than portrayed and promised by theistic religions in Africa. If we were to be supernatural beings, embracing humanism would have been utterly unnecessary. But as humans, humanism is indispensable for Africa.

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[19] Hoogstad, op. cit., p. 7.
[20] Otakpor, op. cit., p. 47.

ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVES TO TRADITIONAL EPISTEMOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

This essay shows that the pre-occupation of traditional epistemology with the search for the necessary and sufficient condition for knowledge is inadequate. Traditional epistemologists conceive knowledge as justified true belief (J.T.B). Once the truth, belief and justification conditions are satisfied, then knowledge is obtained or attained. But each of these conditions is fraught with serious problems as pointed out by Edmund Gettier whose article served as a trenchant critique of the traditional (internalist) analysis of knowledge. The initial difficulties and despair with this view prompted some epistemologists to search for an alternative conception which would overcome or ameliorate these problems.

These suggested alternatives further reinforce the argument or imperative for intercultural philosophy and/or social epistemology which attempts to integrate philosophical and epistemological traditions into a polylog between various philosophical, epistemological, and cultural systems such as African epistemology, Japanese logic, Indian thought, among others. This latter view is appealing because it is based on the belief that the interdependence of our world presupposes an adoption of principle of charity, respect and tolerance for other cultural and conceptual schemes. In other words, no such tradition should claim any privileged or absolute or over-arching position over others since they are at par.

Introduction

The goal or aim of the epistemic agent or epistemology in general is the acquisition of true beliefs and the avoidance of false beliefs. Secondly, the agent, apart from acquiring beliefs, should be able to provide adequate reasons for thinking that such beliefs are likely to be true. Thus, according to Jack S. Crumley, a general characterization of the aim of epistemology is the identification of principles of evaluation for our beliefs, with respect to the adequacy of the reason for thinking that beliefs are likely to be true.[1]

Based on this, it is expected that epistemologists should be interested in providing the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge and justified belief. In this case, knowledge is contrasted with belief or opinion. Whereas beliefs or opinions should be ascribed to things for which there is no evidence, or achieved through mere wishful thinking or fortuitous coincidence, knowledge is backed by evidence or justifiedly warranted evidence. However, a belief is justified and thus becomes a candidate for knowledge if there is good or adequate reason to think that it is true or; at least, likely to be true.[2]

Scepticism has many variants and forms, some moderate or liberal, others extreme or radical. The former grants that certainty in knowledge is attainable if there is good or sufficient reason; the latter denies the possibility of attaining certain knowledge. Thus, scepticism, can be defined as a philosophical doctrine which denies that our claims to knowledge or for that matter, justified belief, are legitimate.[3] If scepticism is right, then knowledge is atrophied or as Peter D. Klein would put it, the requirements for knowledge become so stringent that

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[1] Richard Feldman, "Epistemology and Ethics." In *Roultledge Encyclopaedia of Phylosophy,* vol.3 (1998), p. 365.

[2] Jack S. Crumley, *An Introduction to Epistemology* (London: Myfield Publishing Company 1999), pp. xiii-xiv

[3] Ibid, p. xvi

knowledge becomes impossible to obtain.[4] Since knowledge is the cornerstone or at the heart of philosophy, it is necessary to formulate strategies to show that the sceptical position is not wholly adequate and compelling. One way of refuting the sceptic's position is to show that it is somehow internally inconsistent. The strategy here is to show that since the sceptic is committed to or accepts certain propositions or assumptions, then he cannot consistently deny that we have knowledge or justified belief.[5] Another way of putting the same point is to show, following Donald Davidson, that if we accept that we have beliefs, which the sceptic presumably must concede, then we must also accept that most of our beliefs are true.[6] What these arguments reveal is that a necessary condition of our thinking is that we do indeed have knowledge or justified belief.[7]

The Traditional Analysis of Knowledge

The sceptic's position, draws the attention of philosophers to the need to strengthen the concept of knowledge and also separate it from mere true belief or opinion due to their unreliability. Plato is credited to have begun the analysis of knowledge and to point out the need to separate it from other concepts that purport to be knowledge many centuries ago. In his dialogues, *Meno* and *Theatetus,* one notices how Socrates, who was asked by a pupil, why he preferred knowledge to true beliefs or opinion; answered that true belief or opinion is uncertain, unreliable and has the tendency to be false or disappear.[8] However, Socrates submitted that true belief or opinion is unlikely to be false if it is supported by appropriate account or explanation or justification. In other

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[4]   Ibid, p.1

[5]   Peter D. Klein, "Epistemology." In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* vol.3 (1998), p.363

[6]   Jack. S. Crumley, op. cit, p.20

[7]   Donald Davidson, "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge." In Ernest Lepore, ed., *Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1986), pp 307-319

[8]   Jack. S. Crumley, *An Introduction to Epistemology,* pp. 20- 21

words, there are three elements or criteria noticeable in the traditional (internalist) analysis of knowledge namely; truth, belief and justification.

When all these elements are conjoined, it gives us what is called the traditional analysis or framework of knowledge as justified true belief (JTB) which states that; S (Emeka) knows that P (A.J. Ayer is the author of *The Problem of Knowledge)* if and only if,

K =
(i) P is true
(ii) S believes that P
(iii) S is justified in believing that p[9]

It should be noted that conditions (i-ii) demand that knowledge should, at the minimum, be true belief while condition (iii) stipulates that a necessary condition of knowledge is that the belief be justified or supported by good reasons or evidence. Our concern here is with propositional knowledge *(i.e. knowing that)* which considers the truth of what a person knows as opposed to other senses like *knowing how,* which is an ability or skill and *knowing by acquaintance*, which is familiarity or acquaintance with a state of affairs.

An important feature which should not be shrugged aside in the discussion of the traditional analysis is that it is *internalist* as opposed to being *externalist;* as exemplified by some recent trends in epistemology, particularly those within the naturalistic tradition. Internalism is the view which holds that factors relevant to justification or knowledge must in some way be reflected in the agent's beliefs or cognitive perspective. Such factors, like perceptual experiences, memories, testimony and beliefs must be internal and accessible to the agent by reflection. However externalism, in contrast, reflects the view that the factors

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Edith Hamilton and Huntington Caines, eds., *Plato: The Collected Dialogues* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 1961), pp. 1-40.

necessary for epistemic justification need not be directly accessible to the agent. In other words, such factors should be external and capable of 'explaining the likely truth of the agent's belief'. It is the business of epistemology to identify the factors.

The constituent elements namely; truth, belief and justification in the traditional conception when combined yield what is regarded as the acceptable or standard definition of knowledge as justified true belief which, as stated above, emanated from Plato in the ancient period. Interestingly, some modern and contemporary epistemologists seem to re-echo this analysis of knowledge with slight modifications which is further accentuated by Gettier's trenchant critique of the traditional analysis of knowledge as justified true belief.

So, A. J. Ayer's version of the schema of the traditional analysis given above states that, S knows that P, if and only if

$$Q = \begin{matrix} \text{(i)} & \text{P is true} \\ \text{(ii)} & \text{S believes that p} \\ \text{(iii)} & \text{S has the right to be sure that p}^{10} \end{matrix}$$

In Ayer's version, we notice a substitution of justification "in condition (iii) in K above for "the right to be sure that p" which seems to strengthen the traditional conception because according to him, the people attributing knowledge to S, are thereby expressing a sort of attitude of approval towards S's belief".[11]

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[10] A. J. Ayer, "The Standard Definition." In *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, vol.5, 1980, p.116; see also R. Chisholm, *Theory of Knowledge* (New York, Prentice Hall, 1961).

[11] A. J. Ayer, *The Problem of Knowledge* (Middlesex: Penguin Books 1956), p. 34.

The Gettier Problem

Edmund L. Gettier expressed serious doubts about the adequacy of the traditional analysis in yielding knowledge.[12] In fact, prior to Gettier, the traditional analysis of knowledge as JTB was almost taken as an inviolable or unalterable standard definition of knowledge. Gettier pointed out some loopholes and defects with the traditional analysis arguing that there is nothing sacrosanct about it. He provided two counter-examples which are intended to show that (i) the truth condition (ii) and justification condition (iii) in K above can be independently satisfied". In other words; "the circumstances that account for an agent's being justified in having a particular belief are not necessarily the circumstances that explain the truth of the belief."[13]

Gettier's refutation of the traditional analysis of knowledge as justified true belief using his hypothetical counter examples spurred philosophers to rise in defence of the traditional conception. There is on the one hand, a group of epistemologists who propose a supplementation of the traditional analysis with the addition of a *fourth condition* and on the other hand, there are those who propose a replacement of the traditional analysis with something else.

This group of philosophers, notably Lehrer and Swain among others, propose what is now regarded as *defeasibility theory*.[14] "What counts as defeasibility is still being disputed; but roughly speaking, defeasibility theory, holds that the felicitous coincidence in Smith's claim, that Jones owns a Ford or Brown is in Barcelona can be avoided." The reasons which justify the belief are such that they cannot be defeated by further truth.[15]

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[12] Michael Huemer, ed., *Epistemology: Contemporary Readings* with an Introduction by Robert Audi (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 432.

[13] Edmund L. Gettier, "Is justified. True Belief Knowledge?" *Analysis*, vol. 20, No 6., 1963, pp. 121 – 123.

[14] Jack S. Crumley, op. cit, p. 45.

[15] Michael Huemer, op cit., p. 436.

According to Lehrer and Paxson, a defeater for S's justification for believing P means, a true proposition that if added to S's evidence, would render S no longer justified in believing P. Essentially, Lehrer argues that whenever justification is defective it is so because it is defeated by some false belief. Hence he formulated his fourth condition as a supplement to the one stated in K above as follows;

> (iv) There is no true statement (d) such that if it were to become part of x's justificatory reasoning x would not be completely justified in believing that p.[16]

Apart from this, other strategies aimed at reconstructing the traditional analysis include what Dancy and Crumley call *reliability, indefeasibility theory, conclusive reasons, non-false premise view*, among others, which require that an agent's justified true belief should be derived from a reliable process and should be indefeasible.[17] They also demand that the justification for a person's knowledge should not be based on false premise but should rather be based on conclusive reasons. According to Dretske conclusive reasons simply means that an agent's knowledge should not contain any mistaken belief.[18] For instance, if someone – S knows a certain proposition P on the basis of another K, then K becomes a conclusive reason for S's knowledge of P if and only if K cannot be mistaken. In other

[16] Michael Clark, "Knowledge and Grounds: A comment on Mr. Gettier Paper.' In *Analysis,* vol. 24, 1963, pp. 46 – 48; Keith Lehrer and Thomas Paxson, "Knowledge: 'Undefeated Justified True Belief'. " In *Journal of Philosophy,* vol. 66, 1969, pp. 235 0 237; Marshall Swain, "Epistemic Defeasibility." In *American Philosophical Quarterly,* vol. 11, No. 1, 1974, pp. 15 – 25.

[17] Peter D. Klein, op. cit. p. 363

[18] Keith Lehrer, "A Fourth Condition of Knowledge: A Defence." In *The Review of Metaphysics,* 1970, pp. 125–127; Keith Lehrer, *Knowledge* (Oxford: University Press 1974); See also his Reply to my Critics in John Bender, *The Current State and Self – Trust: A Study of Reason of Knowledge and Autonomy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

words, it is not possible to say that S knows that P is true when in fact K is false.

Now it is something like heroic the attempt to remedy or repair the traditional analysis in order to contain Gettier type cases, but the requirements, particularly conclusive reasons, tend to be too stringent such that 'knowledge may become a rare phenomenon or commodity,' according to Dancy. What constitutes adequate reason for the justification of a belief? This question generates controversies. Thus disputes and interpretations of 'adequacy' or justification condition have torn epistemologists into different camps leading to a formulation of different theories of epistemic justification which will soon become obvious.

The Regress Argument/Problem

The issue here is that my belief in a certain proposition P is justified only if there is someone's evidence for it. For example, my belief that the train will not run today is based on the evidence that it rained last night and that whenever it rains the train will usually not run because the track will be wet. The regress problem begins to emerge because my belief that the train will not run today – P should be supported by other justifying beliefs that it rained last night and that train does not run on wet tracks – Q. Also it is expected that this latter justifying beliefs, must be supported by other justifying beliefs – R and so on *ad infinitum*. It is assumed that this is what constitutes the regress problem because it moves in a dialectical or circular manner. If the regress problem is allowed then no belief will ever be justified and by extension no knowledge will be attained. This is obviously dangerous for epistemology because it then means that the sceptics are rights in denying the possibility of attaining certain knowledge. However, implicit in the regress argument is the

view that "no belief can be justified unless there is some principled way to end the regress."[19]

Foundationalism versus Coherentism

It is argued that one of the ways to end the regress of justification is the adoption of foundationalist and coherence theories. It is proper then to say that the regress problem is the motivating factor for foundationalism and conherentism. The strategy of foundationalists is to categorise our beliefs. According to foundationalists, basic beliefs are justification from other beliefs. In other words, basic beliefs are epistemically independent of other beliefs. Non-basic beliefs do require support from other belief which are themselves self-evident.

The distinction between basic and non-basic beliefs is well-stated by Jonathan Dancy thus;

> *Our basic beliefs are beliefs which concern the nature of our own sensory states, our own immediate experience. Such beliefs are able to stand on their own feet, without support from others. Other (non-basic) beliefs need support and hence must get it from our beliefs about our sensory states.*[20]

Although there is no easy way to define foundationalism, what is however common to all types of foundationalism is the intuition that "certain beliefs are epistemically prior to other beliefs." It is assumed that these basic beliefs do not require support from any other beliefs, but nonetheless serve as the "ultimate doxastic source of the justification of other beliefs.[21] In other words,

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[19] Jonathan Dancy, *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1985), pp. 327–336.

[20] Fred Dretsche, "Conclusive Reasons." In George Pappas and Marshall Swain, eds., *Essays on Knowledge and Justification* (N.Y. Ithaca; Cornell University Press 1978), pp. 11–13.

[21] Robbert Audi, *Belief, Justification and Knowledge* (Belmont C.A.: Wardsworth, 1988), p.86; see also Richard Fumerton, *Meta Epitemology and Skepticism* (Lanham, M.D. Rowman and Littlefield 1995).

foundationalism attempts to achieve among other things, the apodictic certainty upon which all other beliefs rest. The difference between basic or non-inferential beliefs is well stated by Anthony Quinton:

> *If any beliefs are to be justified at all ... there must be some terminal beliefs that do not give their credibility to others, for a belief to be, it is not enough for it to be accepted, let alone merely entertained, there must be good reasons for accepting it. Furthermore for an inferential belief to be justified the (non-inferential) beliefs that support it must be justified themselves.* [22]

Similarly, John Kekes thinks that the epistemological ideal of foundationalism is to begin an enquiry with an unassailable foundation. [23] The history of philosophy (and epistemology) is replete with attempts to provide basic and incorrigible beliefs which provide justification for other beliefs but need no justification themselves. Thus, both rationalism and empiricism are inclined to foundationalism since they tend to provide justification for our beliefs about the external world. In other words, both tradition - rationalism and empiricism - are foundationalist to the extent that the former argues that justification must be absolutely certain and is derived from a process of reasoning, and the latter claims that justification comes from sense perception.

Rene Descartes (1596–1650), a representative of the rationalist school doubted all beliefs he acquired right from childhood, but could however not doubt his existence. Hence his famous dictum *cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am). Apparently, Descartes' real intention was to establish a permanent foundation for knowledge which is infallible, indubitable, certain

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[22] Jonathan Dancy, op cit., p.53
[23] Jack S. Crumley, op cit., p. 117

and incorrigible.[24] Unlike Descartes who was suspicious of every belief, David Hume (1711-1776), a representative of the empiricist tradition, believes that certain features of the external world are indeed true. He argues that our reasons and the methods by which we acquire those beliefs about the world must be adequate.[25] Barry Stroud maintains that Hume can be interpreted as saying that a belief is justified only if there is some justifying reasons to think that the belief is true.[26] However these justifying reasons must be supported by other justifying reasons, that are adequate and derived from sense experience.

So the rationalist and empiricist philosopher were foundationalists to the extent that they seek to ground knowledge on an absolutely certain foundation, although through different routes. The strongest criticism against foundationalism is the denial of the notion of basic beliefs which are thought to be infallible or self-justified and therefore in need of no further justification. Most critics namely; W.V.O. Quine, Wilfrid Sellars, Karl Popper have argued that there are no basic beliefs that are immune to revision.[27] And once the notion of basic beliefs which are "epistemically independent of other beliefs" is rejected, then foundationalist structure of justification collapses.

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[24] Anthony Quinton, *The Nature of Things* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1973), p. 119.

[25] John Kekes, "Recent Tends and Future Prospects in Epistemology.." In *Metaphilosophy*, vol. 8, Nos.2 & 3, 1977, p. 89.

[26] Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, repr. in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes* Elizabeth Haldane and G.R.T. Ross, trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1968), pp. 114 – 145.

[27] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 3rd Ed. L. A. Selby – Bigge, ed., (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1975). pp 44–54.

Opposed to foundationalism is the coherence theory of justification. This is the view that the justification of a belief derives from the coherence of an agent's beliefs.[28] Although coherence theorists quarrel amongst themselves in specifying what exactly 'system of beliefs' means, a key feature of their theory is first the denial that beliefs are epistemically independent of other beliefs, and second the acceptance of the view that justification derives from the mutual support among an agent's beliefs.[29] It is important to remark that there is a subtle difference between Laurence Bonjour's and Keith Lehrer's views on this. The former holds a more global or holistic view of coherence and the latter construes coherence as a relational property. According to Bonjour, an agent should be epistemically responsible. By epistemic responsibility or legitimacy, he meant the ability of the epistemic agent to adduce reasons for thinking that his belief is true or is likely to be true, failing which, according to Bonjour, is;

> *to neglect the pursuit of truth ...my contention here is that the idea of avoiding such irresponsibility, of being epistemically responsible in one's believing, is the core of the notion of epistemic justification.*[30]

We now turn to Lehrer's account of coherence theory of justification. Here the three elements in his account are acceptance, an acceptance system, and comparative responsibility which, taken together, describe a situation when

> *A person accepts a proposition if he is in a certain kind of functional state which typically arises when a person*

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[28] Barry Stroud, *Hume* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 60.

[29] W.V.O. Quine, *From A Logical Point of View* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press 1953), sec. 6; see also Wilfred Sellars, *Science Perception and Reality* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), pp.10–13; Karl Popper *Conjectures and Refutations* (New York: Harper and Row , 1963), pp 24–31.

[30] Jack S. Crumley, op. cit., p. 121

> *reflectively judges that P with the objective of judging that P if and only if P.*[31]

Thus Lehrer's theory of justification boils down to saying that "justified acceptance arises when, relative to what else a person accepts, a proposition is comparatively, more reasonable than any of its epistemic competitors."[32] The main criticism against the coherentist theory of justification is that it is too liberal or tolerant and at the same time too conservative or rigid. According to the theory "a belief is justified so long as it is related in a certain way to the agent's other beliefs." The problem here i. that any belief could qualify as justified so long as it is connected or related to the agent's other beliefs." Again it may be asked; how is it possible to distinguish between beliefs held by a scientific community from those held by charlatans? Besides, "it might be difficult for a person to readily drop or accept fresh evidence in the face of conflict with already held belifes."[33]

Alternatives

One crucial problem with the traditional normative account of knowledge, as some critics have suggested, is that there are no invariant rules or criteria of knowledge contrary of the claims of the traditional epistemologists. In other words, there is 'no fixed set of conditions' that an epistemic agent must satisfy in order to count as knowing a proposition. What is needed, according to some philosophers, is to search for an alternative epistemological framework that would either replace or take care of the pitfalls of traditional normative (internalist) account of knowledge. Some philosophers, like Quine and Goldman, have proposed theories within the naturalistic (externalist) tradition as alternatives to

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[31]   Ibid.

[32]   Lawrence Bonjour, *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge* (Cambridge, M. A, Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 8.

[33]   Keith Lehrer, *Knowledge,* p. 10

traditional epistemology. Yet others have suggested that justification, which is a key but problematic element of knowledge, be contextualized and socialized.

The issues here are that questions of knowledge and justification can no longer be addressed within the normative tradition, but are better tackled within the naturalistic tradition. Roughly speaking, naturalism here simply suggests that questions which are central to epistemology can now be constructed as natural objects. In other words, there is an attempt to understand epistemology and questions of justification in a descriptive form as continuous with science. Thus epistemology in this new neutralised formulation is what Hilary Konblith refers to as 'psychological turn.'[34] Those who propose this new approach, particularly W.V.O. Quine and Alvin Goldman, argue that questions about the justification of beliefs cannot be treated in isolation of questions about a belief's casual ancestry.

W.V.O. Quine – Epistemology Naturalised

The starting point of Quine's critique of traditional epistemology is his now celebrated essay *"Epistemology Naturalised"* where he rejected the pretensions of traditional epistemology to be what he calls 'first philosophy' – a term Quine took to mean the attempt by traditional epistemologists to identify principles or rules with which to justify our beliefs about the world independently of the empirical sciences.[35] Quine claims that the three key features of traditional epistemology namely; autonomy, *a priori* and normative characters as well as the assumption that they are basic beliefs which infallibly justify our knowledge of the world is misleading and ill-motivated.

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[34] Quoted in Jack S. Crumley, op. cit., p. 141.
[35] Ibid., p. 146.

According to Quine the 'functions, subject matter and methodology of epistemology can be appropriately served if we naturalise epistemology and conduct it from within accepted scientific theory.'[36] On this Quine states:

> ... *epistemology, or something like it, simply falls into place as a chapter of psychological and hence of natural science. It studies natural science. It studies a natural phenomenon, viz; a physical human subject. This human subject is accorded a certain experimentally controlled input - certain patterns of irradiation in assorted frequencies...*[37]

The point here, on Quine's view, is to abandon the image of traditional epistemology as the foundation of knowledge as it is expressed by Descartes and to reconstruct it, using the resources of cognitive psychology. The consequence, according to Quine, is a kind of 'reciprocal containment' of science and epistemology within each other. In other words, the tools of science are deployed to construct an epistemological framework, which can afterwards be used to criticize and evaluate science. This seems to plung Quine in a sort of vicious circularity. However he defends his position by using Neurath's metaphor of sailors who have to repair their boat afloat. In other words, "we have to keep the boat of science generally intact while we examine it and repair such parts as we find defective."[38]

Alvin Goldman – Reliabilism

Goldman, like Quine discussed above, claims that questions about the justification of belief cannot be addressed independently of natural order or facts. Goldman took his causal theory and

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[36] Hilary Kornblith, "Beyond Foundationalism and the Coherence Theory," *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. Lxxvii, No.19, 1980, p.601

[37] W.V.O. Quine, "Epistemology Naturalised." In *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York. Columbia University Press, 1969), p.84

[38] David Papineau, "Is Epistemology Dead?" In *Proceedings of Aristotelian Society*, vol. Lxxxii., 1982, pp. 128–142.

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reliabilism as ways of accounting for knowledge and justification thus a belief is justified if it is a consequence of a reliable belief forming process. Goldman is committed to a naturalistic epistemology in that he believes that epistemic evaluations are not autonomous, that is, are not independent of the natural order or environment. Crumley summaries Goldman's naturalistic epistemology thus:

> *Common to Quine ... and Goldman is the claim that epistemic properties are not some special sort of property independent of the natural order. Justification enters the world by way of natural properties whether these are causal relations, types of cognitive process or some other natural factual property.*[40]

One problem with Goldman's view is that epistemic properties seem to be complex and again the question of how to connect the epistemic and natural properties may arise. But despite this, there is a sense in raising the issue of naturalised epistemology, one of which is to understand "our epistemic activities within a generally naturalistic out look."[41]

Contextualism – David Annis and Others

Another emerging theory of justification is contextualism. Contextualism as a theory of justification arose in opposition to foundationalist and coherentist theories discussed above, because

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[39] W.V.O. Quine, op cit , pp. 75 – 76

[40] Jonathan Dancy, op. cit. p. 234.

[41] A.I. Goldman, "A Causal Theory of Knowing." In *Journal of Philosophy,* vol. Lxiv No. 12 , 1967, p. 369; see also Alvin Goldman, "What is Justified Belief?" In G. Pappas, ed., *Justification and Knowledge: New Studies in Epistemology* (Dordrecht Reidel, 1979); Alvin Goldman, "Discrimination and Perceptual Knowledge." In Jonathan Dancy, ed., *Perceptual Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Alvin Goldman, *Liaisons: Philosophy Meets the Cognitive and Social Science* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992).

they tend to invoke universal and invariant rules which would account for all beliefs. David Annis. a strong advocate of contextualism, argues that foundationlism and coherentism fail as theories of justification because they ignore "the actual social practise and norms of justification of a culture or community of people"[42] relevant to justification. The contextualists seem to anchor their argument on the fact that man is a social animal and as such the socio-cultural parameters within the contours of his existential situation should be taken into consideration in the justification of a belief. This point is summarised thus;

> *Man is a social animal, and yet when it comes to the justification of beliefs philosophers tend to ignore this fact. But this is one contextual parameter that no adequate theory of justification can overlook. According to contextualist model of justification ... when asking whether some person S is justified in believing, we must consider this relative to some specific issue or context which determines the level of understanding and knowledge required.[43]*

The point here then is that justification of a belief cannot proceed independently of the norms, social and cultural practices of the epistemic community. The basic objection to this theory is the charge of relativism. Knowledge and justification cannot be left to the judgement of the community which sometimes is erroneous. The key features of contextual theory have been stated before by scholars like Thomas Kuhn – sociologist and philosopher of science and not championed by post-modernist thinkers.

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[42] Jack S. Crumley, op. cit., p. 210.
[43] Ibid, p. 216.

Richard Rorty-Pragmatism and Social Consensus

Another contemporary philosopher whose writings cannot be ignored in any discussion of epistemology is Richard Rorty. The starting point if his critique of philosophy is the foundationalist epistemology which he traced to Plato and culminating in the writings of Descartes and Kant, amongst others. According to Rorty the essential features of their writings is the image of philosophy as a cultural overseer whose task is the investigation and adjudication of the cognitive or knowledge-claims of the sciences and other disciplines.[44] The attempts by these philosophers to essentialize and universalize the notions of rationality, justification and belief are a misguided venture because knowledge has no essences. Rather knowledge is contingent on the community. Thus, Rorty argues, adopting a pragmatist position, that truth is relative of societal agreements. In other words, someone's belief is justified if and only if it is warranted by the epistemic norms of the community. The idea here is that justification is not an abstract and universal property, but a matter of social consensus and practices that are prevalent in a society. In other words, an epistemic agent does not need to invoke any rules in order to justify a belief but only sees how his belief coheres with a certain social practice, a language game, world-view within a particular community.

The usual objection against Rorty is akin to those levelled against relativism. It is alleged that cross – cultural communication and dialogue is almost impossible if Rorty's position is allowed. However, Rorty counters this charge by saying that; "Relativism is the view that every belief on a certain topic or perhaps about any topic is as good as every other. No

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[44] David Annis, "A Contextual Theory of Epistemic Justification," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 15, 1978, pp. 213–219.

one holds this view..."[45] What emerges from our discussion of Rorty is that there is no one way of explaining the world, but different and diverse ways.

Conclusion

The traditional epistemologists; attempt to invoke a set of rules or criteria for the justification of a belief is inadequate. The problems of the justification condition and the vicious circularity associated with foundationalism generated some frustration and suspicion amongst epistemologists. This perhaps motivated the interest of others to search for alternatives to traditional epistemology. Beginning with Quine and culminating in Rorty, there is need to reformulate epistemology or to abandon it altogether. One consequence of a rejection of the traditional picture of knowledge is that there are no trans-cultural criteria of knowledge and rationality. Rather what counts as knowledge, justification and rationality is what any particular epistemic community approves. A further implication of this is that some 'marginalized' and sparsely treated concepts like feminist epistemology, social epistemology, Indian theory of knowledge, African epistemology can now be reasonably and fruitfully discussed.

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[45]   David Annis, "A Contextual Theory of Epistemic Justification." In Louis P. Pojman, *The Theory of Knowledge Classical and Contemporary Readings* (Belmont, California: Wardsworth Publishing Company 1993), p. 282.

THE INDETERMINACY OF DETERMINISM IN WESTERN AND AFRICAN TRADITIONAL THOUGHT

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ABSTRACT

The ancient Greek atomists Leucippus and Democritus were the first set of philosophers that could be said to have anticipated determinism. Socrates and Plato in their theory of immortality of the soul also advocated it. According to Leucippus and Democritus, all processes in the world were due to the mechanical interplay of atoms. This theory was not so much supported in their time. Socrates, through his disciple Plato, theorized with the myth of Er, the son of Odysseus that an individual soul chooses his destiny at the pre-embodied state.

The concept of *ayanmo* (destiny or fate) a popular belief among the Yoruba in the sub-sahara Africa is strikingly parallel to the foregoing Western conception of determinism. Roughly speaking, the myth of *ayanmo* translates *ori-inu* (inner head) which is the unconscious element in the human body that explains the choice of whatever a person becomes. In some respect, *ayanmo/ori* concept seems to picture Freudian 'unconscious.'

Both the Western and African conceptions of determinism as we shall see in this paper concur that the principal consequence of determinism is the entailment that all future events have already been determined and will necessarily happen. It can also be argued that both cultures

associate determinism with, and rely upon, the ideas of materialism and causality

Unfortunately, the two belief systems about determinism is fundamentally vitiated by a seeming contradiction that man is a responsible moral agent. The concepts of punishment and moral responsibility are natural to man. Man naturally desires freedom to choose by preference. Added to this is the fact that intelligence sets man apart from animals and robots. This very point makes the concept of determinism to suffer some internal tension as man's existential significance sounds contradictory to Western and African assumptions of determinism.

Worse still is the African, particularly Yoruba strong conviction that sacrifice can alter or obviate the choice of one's destiny.[1] These problems almost reduce the concept of determinism to mere absurdity, thereby making it indeterminable. These problems form the thrust of this paper.

Determinism in Western and African Thought

The idea that man and in fact the entire universe is a deterministic system has been espoused in both Western and African thought systems. The theory of atomism traceable to Leucippus and Democritus[2] and in fact, as later expounded by Newtonian physics depicts that the physical matter of the universe operate in fixed, knowable laws. Indeed, man and the entire universe obey the cosmic law of flux and are subject to laws external to them or outside their control. The atoms constitute the smallest particles that form the constituent of any solid body.

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[1] G. Dosumu, typescript, n.d. (c 1949)

[2] B. Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1975), pp. 884ff

[3] ibid, p. 87.

According to Leuccipus, the solid or body or matter requires emptiness in order to safeguard movement and multiplicity.[3] Solid bodies fill the vacuum through a mechanical movement outside their control. The atoms that constitute matters are called 'forms.' 'natures'. 'beings' or the 'un-cuttables' These entities (atoms) have the elastic properties of eternity (in time). infinity of number, indestructibility and non-generability in their relation to the qualities, to which they are effectively not susceptible. Man is nothing but a mass of atoms.

In reality, the atomists opine that everything is made of atoms. Nature itself is merely a perennial and causal play of atoms. The basis of the teaching of Leucippus and Democritus is the deterministic principle that "nothing happens without reason, but everything happens through a reason of necessity and the principle of universal causality."[4] The earth rests at the center of the universe and does not fall because it is causally and necessarily so determined. Russell explains the atomists argument in the following words:

> ... everything is composed of atoms, which are physically, but not geometrically, indivisible; that between the atoms there is empty space; that atoms are indestructible; that they always have been, and always will be, in motion ... and their movement are determined outside them.[5]

What we can infer from the foregoing is that the movement of atoms and any matter are determined as they float in motion unconsciously without the ability to control their own movement. This also explains man's action, since man is an aggregate of atomic particles, his behaviour and actions are not subject to his own personal determination, whims and caprices.

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[4] D. Composta, *History of Ancient Philosophy* (Rome: Urbanian University Press, Vatican, 1988), p. 87.

[5] B. Russell, op cit., p. 83

From another perspective, Socrates, a contemporary of Leucippus and Democritus also taught through Plato that the soul of man makes unconscious choice in the pre-existence, at the disembodied state before birth. This thesis is the central theme of his theory of 'immortality of the soul.' In many of his dialogues *(Gorgias, Phaedrus, Phaedo)* Plato elucidates the destiny of the soul before and after death. Plato's myth of *Er*, the son of Odysseus or Armenius explains the procedure through which man's existence or what he would become is determined by the choice he makes for his next cycle of life. *Er* died in a battle but his body did not decay several days after his death. His soul sojourned to the supersensible realm where he was made to see how the cycle of life of man is determined by the activities of the three daughters of necessity, namely, Lauchesis, Clotho and Atropos. Because of its relevance, *Er's* experience can be better explained in the words of Plato as follows:

> *Er saw the soul that had been Orpheus, selecting the life of a swan, because from hatred of the tribe of women, owing to his death at their hands, it was unwilling to be conceived and born of a woman. He saw the soul of Thamyras choosing the life of a nightingale, and he saw a swan changing to the choice of the life of man, and similarly other musical animals. The soul that drew the twentieth lot choose the life of a lion; it was the soul of Ajax, the son of Telemia, which because it remembered the adjudication of the arms of Achilles, was unwilling to become a man, the next, the soul of Agamemmon, likewise from hatred of the human race because of its sufferings, substituted the life of an eagle. Drawing on of the middle lots the soul of Atlanta caught sight of the great honours attached to an athlete's life and could not pass them by but snatched at them. After her, he said; lay the soul of Epeus, the son of Panopeus, entering into the nature of*

*an arts and crafts woman. Far off in the rear he saw the
soul of the buffoon Thersites clothing itself in the body of
an ape. And it fell out that the soul of Odysseus drew the
last lot of all and came to make its choice, and from
memory of its former toils having flung away ambition,
went about for a long time in quest of the life of an ordinary
citizen who minded his own business, and with difficulty
found it lying in some corner disregarded by the
others...and in like manner, the unjust into wild creatures,
the just transformed to lame, and there was every kind of
mixture and combination*

The passage adds that after making a choice, an individual soul
is made to drink from the water of forgetfulness. This is to
prevents man from knowing what has been determined for him
by the lot he has chosen.

Essentially, Plato's theory attributes the choice of human
action to his own choice of the *lot* or *luck* that had already been
determined for him. In that wise, man is free to choose yet, his
existence has already been determined by the choice of his lot;
implying that man's *lot* or choice of what he becomes in the next
life stands outside him because he cannot in anyway influence
the *lot* that had already been decided for him.

It seems difficult to reconcile the sentence 'man is free
to choose from any *lot*' and the entailment: the lot of a man
determines whatever he will become in life. Since man is ignorant
of the content of his *lot*, then man does not operate within the
modicum of free-choice, meaning that 'man' is not a party to his
own destiny since it has been determined for him.

Closely related to the Western thought is the Yoruba myth
of *ayanmo/akunleyan* determinism, a myth that is usually
associated with a verse of the *Odu-Ifa* literature among the

Yoruba *ipin* (allotment) translates *ayanmo* or destiny in Yoruba thought. *Ayanmo* concept derives from *Odu. Ika-Ofun*. This has been published by Gbadebo Dosumu. As reported by Olufemi Morakinyo, I quote this verse of *Odu*:

Akunleyan eda
Oun ladeyebu.
Ad'aye tan, oju nkan ghogbo wa
Siigbon eda na ko see pada lo ya omiran
Ifi erutu lo ku

What was choosen kneeling down
Is what we find on arrival in this world
On arrival in this world, we become too impatient
(too much in a hurry to achieve our potentials)
but is impossible to go back and choose another
to prevent deterioration of things is the only course of
action left.

This verse explains the act of choice by man of his own 'ori' which is necessitated by bending or kneeling down. The choice of 'ori' that is made at this point is significant for an individual's choice of later life. It also explains that once a choice has been made, it become irrevocable. As earlier published by Wande Abimbola,[7] the myth of *ayanmo* like the myth of *'Eri'* argues that before coming to this life *(aye)* from heaven *(orun)* an individual has the privilege of choosing an *'ori'* from the store-house of *Ajala*, an appointed servant of *Olodumare* (God) who

O. A. Morakinyo, "Methodological Consideration of Cross-Cultural Research: The Problems and Implications of Ethnographic Translation," *African Journal of Behavioural Sciences*, 1: p. 69.

[7] W. Abimbola, *Ifa, An Exposition of Ifa literary Corpus* (Ibadan O.U. 1976), pp. 178-207.

is saddled with the responsibility of building 'ori.' No individual is competent to know the content of 'ori' he has choosen. It is *Ajala*, a senior *orisa* (deity) who knows all and he moulds *ori* daily as that is his main assignment. It is evident from the myth of 'ayanmo/ipin' that the choice of an individual's *ori* plays critical role in the series of events in each person's life.[8]

The following features seem to be common to both the Western and African conception of determinism, albeit: that the foundation for many of the events that would occur in an individual life has already been laid before him; that an individual is responsible for the choice of his own destiny and once a choice has been made, it is irrevocably sealed. It is pertinent to ask at this juncture – is man a free moral agent? Since his actions have been determined, can it be said that man is a responsible being? If man is not responsible for his actions, what is the relevance of the concept of 'responsibility', 'punishment' and 'reward'? Such questions would continue to swell if we consider the implications of the concept of determinism in both Western and African thought as espoused in this paper. However, more challenging and indeterminable is the puzzle of determining determinism within the context of the very nature of man.

Naturally, certain traits of man make the very concept of determinism preposterous. Without recourse to the theory of 'free-will' or 'incompatibilism', 'man' seems to be naturally endowed with freedom as an intelligent existent. To have such natural capacity is to act freely as well as to have what it takes to act freely. Consequently, what a man does is up to himself. He has a plurality of alternatives and he determines which course of action to pursue. If this argument holds, then, determinism in

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[8] M. A. Makinde, "Immortality of The Soul and The Yoruba Theory of Seven Heavens," *Journal of Cultures and Ideas*, vol.1., No.1., Dec. 1983.

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whatever version is false as it contradicts the very essence of man. The danger of emphasizing determinism in any thought system is repudiation of chance events and of course. indeterminism. The determinists' argument is strictly impossible. If the future was imbedded in the past. no new information would be introduced into the world and man would not be classified as being capable of any creative or imaginative thought.

As a matter of fact, the discovery of Edward Lorenz (1961) of the theory of 'chaos' and 'probability' serves as a logical polemic against Newtonian physics in considering the behaviour of atomic systems. [9] In what follows, determinism will be assessed from the point of the theory of 'chaos' and 'probability'.

Determinism, Chaos and Probability

The word 'chaos' according to Houghton is used as a technical term to describe a system whose behaviour is extremely dependent on the initial conditions from which the system started – so dependent in fact, that after a short time it becomes essentially unpredictable.[10] The point Houghton seems to make by his claim can better be understood by the illustration with a 'simple pendulum'. For example, for a bob swinging around in a circle at the end of a string, the frequency of a natural oscillation (the frequency with which the bob swings when allowed to swing freely) is given by a simple expression, namely, that the behaviour of the pendulum is regular and predictable and not dependent on the precise way the driving force is applied. But at other periods close to resonance (when the forcing frequency equals the natural frequency of oscillation), the pendulum behaves in a chaotic way;

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[9] E. N. Lozenz, *The Essence of Chaos* (Washington, University of Washington Press, 1993).

[10] J. Houghton, *Global Warning; The Complete Briefing* (London: Lion Publishing, 1994).

it is then extremely sensitive to minute variations in the driving force.

Suppose that at some stage of the motion very precise details are available of the motion of the bob and the forcing motion, can the bob's subsequent motion be predicted? To begin with, there would be good correspondence between predictability and observation. But as time goes on, divergence occurs. This is called the predictability horizon. If the initial conditions are more accurately defined, the predictability horizon will move away. Roughly speaking, the predictability horizon increases proportionally to the number of decimal places in the definition of the initial conditions.

It is instructive to note that the foregoing allusion to the theory of chaos has serious implications for determinism, particularly, Newtonian determinism. If quantum mechanics is also included in our description of events, as soon as the specification of the initial conditions required for prediction involves details, say, of the movement of individual electrons, then the Heisenberg's 'uncertainty principle' becomes relevant.[11] We come up against an inability not only in practice but in principle to specify with adequate precision the initial conditions. This means that prediction of the future behaviour of very many large scale systems, even for a relatively short time ahead, also becomes impossible in principle.

In sum, it has been argued that chaos and probability play a large part in our modern scientific description, be it in physics or biology, and our daily lives are filled with chance occurrences.

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[11]   D. Tritton, "Chaos in The Swing of Pendulum," *New Scientist* (London: Lion Publisher, 1986), p. 220; see also E. N. Lozenz, *The Essence of Chaos* (University of Washington Press, 1993).

We are bombarded with statistics about the probabilities of being born with various defects, of particular sorts of crimes, of death from various causes and so forth. In fact, Richard Dawkins hunch, for example, strengthens the above claim that chance processes have provided a firm basis for Darwinian evolution.[12] In similar vein, Donald Mackay[13] and Arthur Peacocks[14] submit that chance and probability, although properly part of a scientific description, are not causes of events any more than any other scientific description of laws can be said to have causal properties. Chaos too does not make things happen. It can be safely concluded that the scientist's capacity to predict the future is very much more limited than we think.

The theory of chaos, is a reasonable interpolation to our discussion of the indeterminacy of determinism. The theory provides a mechanism that allows for free will within a world seems to be governed by deterministic laws. Thus, inherent in determinism itself is freedom that cannot be detached from it. And more importantly, it can be said that there are events which do not correspond with determinism and therefore have no cause. The point is in contradiction to the determinist's assumption that every event, including human cognition and action, is causally determined by an unbroken chain of prior occurrences since no mysterious miracles or wholly random events occur. But this is not the cause. Taken at face value, determinism is saying that man is an irresponsible moral agent.

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[12] R. Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker* (London, Longman, 1986), p. 78.
[13] D. Mackay, *Science, Chance and Providence* (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 110-117.
[14] J. Gleick, *Chaos* (London: Heinemann, 1988).

Conclusion

Among philosophers and psychologist even across cultures, determinism is a re-current topic and has faced a spate of criticisms. Debates about this subject-matter will remain open-ended. It is expedient to add that indeterminism is a fundamental quality of nature. As the existentialist philosophers would argue, man finds himself thrown into this world, and throughout his life, he is nothing else but what he makes of himself. As his destiny lies in his hands, he is free to live his life in whatever way he chooses.[15] This very nature of man is incompatible with the central teaching of determinism, whatever its form. Therefore, Western and African conceptions of determinism is beset by the problem of reconciling the nature and essence of man with the central theme of determinism.

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[15] J. P. Satre, *Existentialism and Humanism* (London, Methuen Ltd., 1978).

THE IMPLICATIONS OF *IWA* (CHARACTER) AND *EWA* (BEAUTY) FOR POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Our concern in this paper is to explore the relationship between *iwa* and *ewa* by examining Yoruba art forms like music, oratory, proverbs and poems, and films in order to draw out some implications for leadership in the social and political order in Africa. In the paper, we shall look at the Western axiological system and its African counterpart and examine some differences and similarities. We shall then focus on the dialectical relationship between *iwa* (character) and *ewa* (beauty). By examining various Yoruba art forms, we shall suggest that the combination of *iwa* and *ewa* is what political leaders require for good governance.

Introduction

What is the relationship between *iwa* (character) and *ewa* (beauty) in Yoruba axiological system? What are implications of the relationship for political leadership in Africa? The motivation for answering these questions is derived from Abiodun's observation that "there is no doubt that the concept of *iwa* is crucial to the definition of beauty in Yoruba thought. Even though most scholars who have written on, or studied the subject appear to have acknowledged this fact, the dynamic and living relationship which exists between *iwa* (character) and *ewa*, (beauty), has yet to be explained."[1]

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[1] Rowland Abiodun, "Identity and the Artistic Process in Yoruba Aesthetic Concept of Iwa," *Journal of Cultures and Ideas*, 1983, p.13.

Since Abiodun's observation, there are scholars who have attempted to rise up to the challenge of exploring the relationship between *iwa* and *ewa* ² However, even before Abiodun raised the issue of the relationship between character and beauty in Yoruba thought, there were implicit references to such relationship in other sources of Yoruba literature and world view like the Ifa Corpus and other seminal texts such as D.O. Fagunwa, *Igbo Olodumare, Ireke Onibudo, Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale and Irinkerindo Ninu Igbo Elegbeje.* There are also implicit references to a relationship between *iwa* (character) and *ewa* (beauty) in many classical texts such as J.F. Odunjo's *Alawiye* and songs by such musicians as Sunny Ade, Ebenezer Obey and Orlando Owoh. Artisitic expressions (music, poem, films) that depict ethical and political values have also been exemplified in artists like Hubert Ogunde, Lamidi Adejumo (Baba Sala) Fela Anikulapo Kuti and Lagbaja.

Western Axiological System

Axiology is the study of values. Within Western thought, ethics and aesthetics are regarded as value oriented disciplines in philosophy. Such disciplines are concerned with evaluation of ideas, thoughts, statements and expressions in relation to standards that are not purely empirical. The history of the relationship between ethics (human conduct) and aesthetics (beauty) has been a chequered one, Thus, for instance, Plato had advocated for an intimate connection between the good and the beautiful thereby drawing some substantive implications for how human beings ought to live; while Kennick held that it is a mistake

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²   Such scholars include Segun Gbadegesin, *African Philosophy; Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary Realities* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991); Barry Hellen, *The Good, The Bad and the Beautiful* (Bloomington and Indianapolis University Press, 2000); J. A. I. Bewaji, *Beauty and Culture: Perspectives in Black Aesthetics* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd, 2003).

to hold that there is a logical symmetry between moral judgments and aesthetic judgments. Kennick based his views on the belief that ethics has a standard of evaluation while aesthetics does not.[3]

Moreover, some thinkers on Western axiology have held that the value disciplines in philosophy, such as ethics and aesthetics can be analyzed in purely scientific ways and if this cannot be done, then such disciplines can only be regarded as performing only emotional functions without any cognitive values.[4] There are also analytic philosophers, for instance, Moore who are apt to suggest that terms like "good" and "beauty" are unanalyzable because they are simple notions.[5] It was only in the era of pragmatism as witnessed in the works of Dewey and Rorty that we are witnessing the existential and cultural dimensions of the value disciplines and a discouragement of the water tight distinction between science and values. Rorty, in particular, has suggested a kind of ecumenical relationship between all disciplines, identifying them within solidarity with the community.[6]

The major difference between Western axiological system and its African counterpart is that while the former seems not to enjoy much stability in view of the fact that from time to time, scholars propound different theories that spell out the relationship between ethics and aesthetics, the latter enjoys some

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[3]   W. E. Kennick, "Does Traditional Aesthetics on Miracle?" In Cyril Barret ed, *Collected Papers on Aesthetics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), pp. 1-23.

[4]   A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (England: Penguin Books, 2001).

[5]   G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

[6]   John Dewey, "Art as an Experience." In David Goldblatt and Lee B. Brown, eds., *Aesthetics: A Reader in Philosophy of Arts* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2005); Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragamatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minneota, 2001).

stability in that its theory is based upon the African traditional communal system of social and cultural engineering.

African Axiological System

There is some degree of consistency and stability in the linkage of ethics and aesthetics in African thought. With the exemption of the philosophers that have been tagged "African neo-positivist", scholars that have examined the relationship between ethics and aesthetics have identified logical, epistemic, ontological and existential connections between the two disciplines. We have noted Abiodun's statement in this regard in the introductory section of this paper. In this connection, Hallen has this to say about the relationship between ethics and aesthetics:

> *I have chosen the term (values) because it is a way to avoid the arbitrary division that has been introduced into English Language discourse by the use of the separate terms "ethics" (arising from art) as if naming two different intellectual realms. For in the discussions with the onisegun, the transition from the "good" to the "beautiful" was as systematic and coherent as was the case with that between the epistemological and the moral.[7]*

And Bewaji asserts that "Songs (a form of art) are a useful medium for the development of the sense of right and wrong (ethics) in members of society as they teach the young and the old accepted codes and norms of socio-political, cultural and religious behaviour."[8]

Two essential lessons could be learnt from the linkage of ethics with aesthetics. The first is that the African world view/ conceptual system does not condone individualistic and atomistic conception of reality; rather it sees all the items in the conceptual

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[7] Barry Hallen, op. cit., p.113

[8] J. A. I. Bewaji, op. cit., pp. 161-162

system as being related to one another: humans are related to non-human, living to non-living, the sacred to the profane, the living to the dead. The second lesson is that values do not exist in themselves; rather they exist in relation to particular existential experiences of the people.

The Dialectics of *Iwa* and *Ewa* in Yoruba Axiological System

What is the dialectical relationship between *iwa* and *ewa* as depicted in the Yoruba saying that *"iwa lewa?"* One of the first poems, that were learnt by heart by children attending school for the first time in Western Nigeria, in the sixties, was the poem that links *iwa* and *ewa*. According to *Alawiye Apa Kinni,* written by J.F. Odunjo, under the heading *IWA LEWA*:

> *Toju iwa re ore mi*
> *Ola o maa silo nile eni*
> *Ewa a si maa sa lara eniyan*
> *Bi o lowo*
> *Bi oko niwa*
> *Tani je finu too bio ba sohun rere*
> *Bio si je obinrin rogbodo*
> *Bio ba jina si iwa ti eda n fe*
> *Tani je fe o sile bi aya*

> My Friend, mind your character
> Wealth can easily depart from a person
> Beauty can also fade from a person
> If you are rich
> But if you lack character
> Who will ever trust you if you achieve success
> If you are a beautiful woman
> If you are far from the character which persons expect
> Who will ever got married to you?[9]

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[9] J. F. Odunjo, *Alawiye Apa Kinni.*

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The morale in this poem is that *iwa* (character) is preferable to *ewa* (beauty) in Yoruba axiological thought. However, there has to be further analysis of *iwa* and *ewa* and the connection between them before the importance of this position could be fully appreciated. In order to do this, we will look at the ontology and epistemology of *iwa* and *ewa*.

The Ontology and Epistemology of *Iwa* and *Ewa*

In the literature[10] two interpretations have been given to the term *iwa*, one ontological and the other ethical. *Iwa* designates both existence and character. The ethical meaning is derived from the ontological meaning. *Iwa* (existence) is the essential quality of any thing, whether human or non-human. In relation to human, *iwa* (existence), which may be translated as 'living' is very essential to the human person, hence the Yoruba saying *"iwa laaye omo eniyan se pataki"* (person's being is considered important). However, the being or existence of a person is not seen in absolute terms, it has to be exemplified in good character; hence the highest accolade that could be used to express the being of a person is *omoluwabi*. That is, a person of good character, an attribute gotten from the Creator. Persons are also described as *eniyan* on the basis of the possession of *iwa* (existence) and *iwa* (character). When a person has *iwa* (good character) she is described as *eniyan rere*; while a person who does not have (good) character is described as *eniyan buruku*. In some cases, if a person consistently exhibits character that is not good, she is described as *kii seniyan* (not a person).

Like functional objects, a person could be described as *eniyan* on the basis of whether he or she is a responsible person,

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[10]   Wande Abimbola, "Iwapele: The Concept of Good Character in Ifa Litrary Corpus." In Wande Abimbola ed, *Yoruba Oral Tradition* (Ife: Department of African Languages and Literature, 1975); See also Abiodun, op. cit.; Gbadegesin, op. cit.; Hallen, op. cit.

in the sense of exhibiting a character that conforms with the expectations of the community. A person could therefore be described as *wulo* (useful) or *ko wulo* (not useful). However, the functionalist interpretation of *wulo* is not in respect of instrumental rationality, the type of rationality that defines a person in relation to means and ends; rather it is the kind of rationality that is in conformity with the standard of *omoluwabi* (person with good character), both in one's private and public life. On the other hand, a person's *iwa* (existence) may be defined in respect of whether he/she has conformed to the expectation of certain purposes that are intrinsic to his or her existence. Thus a woman is expected to bear children as a means of propagating the species; a woman that is able to bear children is described as *olori rere* (good inner head) while a woman who by any reason cannot bear children may be regarded as *olori buruku* (bad inner head). A woman who decides not to have children is not a woman at all (*kii se obinrin*). The Yoruba say that "*obinrin to waye ti ko bimo dabi ogede tia gbin si ipa odo ti ko so*" (a childess woman is compared to a banana planted beside a river that does not bear fruit).

A man is also expected to be able to provide for his family and if he does this well, he is *oko atata* (good husband). A child is expected to uplift the name of his/her family through good character and other positive achievements. A child that does this is *omo rere* (good child). A leader (*asiwaju*) is to lay good example for his/her followers to follow. If he/she does this well, he/she is *asiwaju rere* (good leader) Parts of the human body are also described as good or bad in relation to how well they exhibit their purposes. For instance, *funfun niyi ehin, o gun rege niyi orun* (whiteness is the essence of the teeth, straightness, the essence of the neck).

Iwa (existence and character) could also be applied to non-human objects in accordance with the purposes for which

These objects are manufactured and put to use. Thus *obe* (knife) is made in order for it to cut. And if the knife cuts well, then it is *obe didaradara* (a good knife). Just like a person can exhibit a character that is not good, a knife can also be put into bad use, for example if it is used to stab a person.

However, the difference in the application of *iwa* (existence) and *iwa* (character) to humans and non-humans is the possession of consciousness (about consciousness or intentionality) in the latter and lack of it in the former. Human beings possess *inu*, which has been translated in various ways. According to Hallen "*Inu* is a general or comprehensive term the Yoruba can use to refer to the psychological self, psychological in the sense that 'inner, private, mental', enduring conscious element or dimension to the person".[11] Some of the mental faculties or capacities that constitute the *inu* are *okan* (mind) *ogbon* (wisdom) *opolo* (intellect) *eri okan* (judgment) *oju inu* (inner eye) *iye inu* (insight) *iwa* (character) *suuru* (patience). In epistemic terms, these mental faculties are subjectively grounded in the individual person. This is what could be referred to as 'first person epistemology' in Western philosophy. One of the attributes of this first person epistemology is that it carries conviction, whether in the epistemic or in the ethical sense. The epistemic and ethical connotations of *inu* in Yoruba have their parallels in Prichard's intuitionism, as a theory of justification in ethics, which states that the attempt to give justification for our moral obligations rests on a chance. This is because we know what is right by means of a special cognitive ability called intuition.[12]

However, it has been suggested by Gbadegesin that *inu* can also be regarded as one of the components of *ara* (body) in

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[11] Hallen, op cit., p.44
[12] H. A. Prichard , "Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?" *Mind*, 21, 1914, pp. 487-499.

the sense that there are physical organs in the human body that are not immediately visible from the outside, but which can be given certain operations Such organs like *okan* (heart) *edo* (liver) *ifun* (intestine) are examples of *inu* in a non-psychological sense in relation to Hallen's analysis, but which nonetheless play psychological roles. Thus the Yoruba could say in psychological terms: *Ko lokan* (not courageous) *O foju edo woo* (looks at woman) with love) *Won ti ko nifun lo* (somebody has been brainwashed).[13]

The dialectics of *ara* and *inu* is exemplified in the description of *Alakori* (stupid person) as depicted by Fagunwa "*Alakori dabi okunrin arewa ti o dara loju sugbon ti inu re kun fun jedijedi ati aran, eeri edo ati eeri ifun*"[14] (A stupid man is like a person who is good to look at but whose bowel has been infected by dysentery and worms, with dirty liver and dirty intestine).

Just like Kant's maxims such as, good will, intentions and motives are ingredients in assessing the morality, *iwa* of persons within the Yoruba axiological system. Thus persons are not judged as beautiful only in respect of their outward appearance and behaviour, they also possess inner beauty, *ewa inu* which is exemplified in good and moral behaviour. The ability to judge between right and wrong lies with *eri okan* (conscience), which is both an epistemic and ethical faculty.[15]

Ewa inu (inner beauty) could be attributed to the output of the different mental faculties mentioned earlier on in terms of the spoken words. Thus the Yoruba say "*bi inu ba ti ri lobi iyan*"

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[13] Gbadegesin, op cit.

[14] D. O. Fagunwa, (1950) *Igbo Olodumare* (Lagos; Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd); also *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale* (Lagos: Thomas Nelson Ltd.), p. 34.

[15] Immanuel Kant, *Ground of Metaphysic of Morals.* H.J. Paton, trans. (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1953).

[It is how the mind works that will determine the outcome of a drumming process]. Ewa ede (beauty of speech) might refer to a person's creative and oratory skills. The Yoruba prefer a person who speaks ooto (truth) but with little oratory skill to one who possesses oratory skill but who is an agabagebe (deceitful person). However, in some instances, unlike Kant, who believes that the truth must always be told irrespective of the consequences, the Yoruba believe truth is spoken on pragmatic grounds, to the extent that speaking truth will depend on a given circumstance.

Thus, *Olowo-Aye*, the main character in Fagunwa's novel, *Igbo Olodumare* observed when he refused to confess any of his misdeeds before Anjonnu Iberu, Chief Security Officer of Igbo Olodumare. In his words:

> omo eniyan kii jewo ooto niwaju ota" (No one ever speaks the truth before her enemy). This does not however detracts from the general rule that omoluwabi should always speak the truth, for as Fagunwa also noted, "igbati omo araye ba ti gbe ewu ibaje wo tan, nwon a fi igboju bo ara won ni asiri itiiju, oro pele a salo kuro lodo eniyan, ohun gbogbo a di jagidijagan.
>
> Persons refuse to tell the truth when they realize that they have done wrong and unwilling to own up. Instead, they speak with force in order to cover the shame that results from their wrong doing and soft words will depart from their mouth and all things will go hay wire.[16]

What is the relationship between the two meanings of *iwa*, that is *iwa* as character and existence? How can we relate them to the concept of *ewa* (beauty)? These questions will be invesdtigated in virtue of the fact that Yoruba language is a tonal

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[16] Fagunwa, op cit., p.35

language, the relationship between *iwa* and *ewa* changes in accordance to the tonal rules of the language.

Iwa (existence, character) and *Ewa*: The Dialectical Relationship

In Yoruba language there are words that have the same spellings but whose tones might change the meaning of the statements in which they occur. This observation applies to the statement '*iwa lewa.*' As the forgone analysis has shown, *iwa* might mean existence or character. Consequently, '*iwa lewa*' might mean the following

   Iwa ni Ewa (Existence is beauty)   - identity

   Iwa ni Ewa (Existence is beautiful) - prediction

   Iwa (wa) ninu ewa (Existence is in Beauty) - class membership

   Iwa ni Ewa (Character is Beauty)   - identity

   Iwa ni Ewa (Character is beautiful) - predication

   Iwa (wa) ninu ewa (Character is in Beauty) - class membership.

The logic behind the use of the copula '*ni*' (is) is that of the Law of Identity as enunciated by Aristotle in the three Laws of Thought; and can be subjected to different interpretations.[17]

    Logical rules may hold across cultures, but the existential import of such rules depend on the realities of different cultures. As (Winch 1974) is apt to suggest, criteria of logic are not a direct gift of God, but arise out of, and are only intelligible in the context of ways of living or modes of social life.[18] In other words, the logical relationship between *iwa* and *ewa* is intelligible only when we relate it to the Yoruba existential realities. One way of substantiating this position is to consider the meaning of *iwa* (existence) and examine how it is related to *iwa* (character) and *ewa* (beauty).

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[17] Gordin Hunnings, "Logic, Language and Culture" , *Second Order: An African Journal of Philosophy,* IV:1., 1975.

[18] Peter Winch, "The Idea of a Social Science." In Bryan Wilson ed., *Rationality* (Oxford Blackwell., 1974).

In Yoruba to say that something (person, animal, plant, object) is, means that the thing exists. But existence is not seen in abstract terms; rather it is linked to the purpose (Aristotle's telos) of that thing It is when that thing conforms to certain ends expected of it that it can be described as *dara* (beautiful). However, in contrast to the Aristotelian belief that the end of all activities is that of Contemplation, the things that are in conformity to their ends always exhibit these features. They are always visible to other entities in the environment and as such are regarded as beautiful. What we are saying here can be illustrated by Inada assertion that:

> *A thing of beauty is always fresh, vital, principled, and divine; it is the exemplification of a work in graceful and disciplined motion, as seen, for example, in the performances of a dancer, an athlete, or a devotee of a t'ai-chi"* [19]

In the same view, Quintas sees aesthetic experience as making possible the communion of man/woman with certain realities from his/her environment, for neither are mere 'objects' but 'nobjective' realities endowed with a power of initiative, with the ability to assume possibilities and accomplish them.[20]

That the purpose or end of things is always a dynamic interaction of that thing with itself and the environment is suggested by various Yoruba proverbs and wise sayings. These proverbs and wise sayings suggest that beautiful things, that is things that conform to their ends can have such ends thwarted on the basis of their own nature or on the basis of interference of other things in the environment. Thus a person of good character, *eniyan rere* is considered as a person with an immaculately white

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[19] Kenneth K. Inada, "A Theory of Oriental Aesthetics: A Prolegomenon," *Philosophy East and West,* 47:2, 117-131, 1997, (see p.26).

[20] Alfonso Lopez Quintas, "Art and Culture," *International Philosophical Quarterly* , 24, 1984: 373-381, p.379

existence; a suggestion that the person is really a creature of *Olu-Iwa (omoluwabi)* But such a person can have his/her character tarnished or tainted by corrupt practices whether of his/her own will or through the influences of other persons around him/her or institutions to which he/she belongs. Thus the Yoruba often express it in prayer that *omo araaye ko ni tapo si ala wa.* (May human beings not put stain on our white garment). A person who has been corrupted by bad influence is a person that has fallen from grace to grass in relation to his/her moral personality. The person is no longer respected as *omoluwabi.* Thus an athlete who has been stripped of his/her medals on proven allegation of having taken performance enhancing drugs, a politician that has been impeached on a proven case of corruption, a woman/man whose partner has sought divorce because of infidelity are instances of persons whose characters have been tarnished by themselves or through the influences of the institutions to which they belong.

Aesthetic Expressions as Reflection of Existential Realities

One of the philosophical problems of aesthetics is the relationship between the artist, and what he/she expresses by his/her work. The predominant view in Western philosophy is that "art and beauty is expression of feeling or emotion."[21] However, feelings and emotions have objects and the further problem is the relationship between these feelings and emotions and what they are about, that is what they represent. Different philosophical (cultural) traditions have given responses to these questions on the basis of their own peculiar world views. Onyewuenyi observed that:

> *The ultimate basis for cultural differences in interpreting and appreciating art works rests principally on*

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[21] W. Charlton, *Aesthetics: An Introduction,* London: Hutchinson University Library, 1970, p. 84.

differences in metaphysics. which is an integral vision of reality as such. Thus it has been traditionally held that Western ontology and epistemology are based on the yardstick of individualism. The individual, according to this view, is the primary reference on all issues relating to existence and knowledge. The tradition has been exemplified in the philosophical systems of the 17 Century Continental rationalists, especially Descartes and British empiricists, like David Hume. As it relates to aesthetics, the belief is that it is the individual artist that is the sole judge of his/her works because he/she has intended something by them and as long as the works of art "correspond" to the thing needed, then they are good beautiful works of art. According to Oyewuenyi, the Western perspective on aesthetics puts emphasis on individuality and uniqueness in the interpretation of works of arts.[22]

Carroll made allusion to this view when he observes:

In the West, as the eighteenth century dissolved into the nineteenth, ambitious artists - both in theory and in practice - began to turn inward; they became less preoccupied with capturing the appearance of nature and manners of society tthan to exploring their own subjective experiences.[23]

Another feature of the Western conception of aesthetics, which also derives from its ontology and epistemology, is the idea of art for art's sake, a position that stresses only the intrinsic worth

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[22] Innocent C. Onyewuenyi, "Traditional African Aesthetics: A Philosophical Perspective", *International Philosophical Quarterly*, XXIV:3, 1984, 237-243. (see pp. 239-240)

ibid.

of a work of art. Onyewuenyi also explains this feature in the following way:

> *Much emphasis is placed on the "perfection of art works, the prestige Possess because of a long history of unquestioned admiration. Descriptive terms such as 'lively expression', 'naturalistic', 'disinterested gratification', 'ugly', 'beautiful', etc. characterize European/American evaluation of designs and motifs of art works. Thus they are separated from conditions of history and origin and operation in experience.*[24]

Duran is essentially in agreement with the views expressed by Onyewuenyi when she observed:

> *Historically speaking, we can trace the notions of detachment in European . aesthetics to a period far beyond the Enlightenment; we can, of course, trace notions to Plato. Because Western philosophy is rooted in the notion of give account of, where the term to be given an account of is divorced from contextual considerations, we can with a fair degree of accuracy say that the notions of beauty found throughout Western aesthetics are lineal descendants of some sort of Platonic conception of Beauty.*[25]

However, Duran also observed that in the late 20th century things started to change in respect to this conception of aesthetics. The reason for this change is connected with the current attitude of human beings to nature, where nature is regarded as a kind of force. One of the implications of this belated understanding of nature is that human beings nowadays regard degradation of the environment as their own degradation and therefore aesthetics is no longer seen in detached and disinterested perspectives.

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[24] Onyewuenyi, op cit., p. 241.

[25] ibid

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In contrast to Western conception of aesthetics, the Yoruba (African) aesthetics is closely and inextricably linked to her metaphysics. As Onyenwuenyi observes: "Its (aesthetics) theory or standard of evaluation must conform to the theories of its sister disciplines and stem identical metaphysical foundations. Hence African art is functional, community-oriented, depersonalized, contextualized, and embedded."[26] In the same vein, Duran, while comparing European aesthetics with Yoruba aesthetics observes that Yoruba aesthetics is predicated upon the Yoruba world view in the sense that "one cannot remove oneself from one's 'self concerns' and 'peculiarities' because these concerns are intimately linked to cosmological functioning."[27]

The essential point being made by these authors is that aesthetics cannot be divorced from specific cultural and historical realities. The position has captured the kernel of sociology of knowledge in our time, to the effect that all branches of knowledge are interconnected and that they serve the function of connecting knowledge with the concrete realities of human beings in different cultures and in different historical periods. Thus, aesthetic expressions, judgments and attitudes are always related to concrete life situations of the artist and his/her cultural realities, be it social, economics and political. We shall illustrate this position with Yoruba aesthetic expressions as they relate to her ethical values and institutions and then draw attention of such relationship to political leadership in Africa.

Yoruba Art Forms and Ethical, Social and Political Behaviours

Most of Yoruba art forms - proverbs, music, poems, films, story telling and oratory are didactic in character. They are meant to inculcate in persons, good behaviours both at personal and

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[26] Onyewuenyi, op cit., p.242
[27] Duran, op cit., p.39

institutional levels. They do this by special appeal to the consciousness of the audience in order to bring about certain ethical, social and political attitudes which are meant to promote harmonious relationships between individuals and the community of which individuals are integral parts. These art forms are not just expressed in ordinary language; rather they are couched in aesthetically fascinating fashions that are captivating to the audience. Art forms are meant to induce particular ethical/ political/social behaviour and this requires that the speaker or performer is well-attuned to the existential realities around him/ her at a particular time in the history of the people. Thus, *ewa ede* (beauty of/ beautiful language) is meant to induce *ewa iwa* (beautiful character) in the participants in Yoruba art form.

ˋ   Proverbs *(owe)* is regarded among the Yoruba as an important vehicle for understanding issues and driving home important lessons, most of which are ethical and social in character; hence the Yoruba saying, "*owe lesin oro*" (proverb is the vehicle of words). Proverbs have *ewa ara* (outer beauty) depending on how eloquently the speaker expresses it and *ewa inu* (inner beauty) depending on the fitness to the particular situation to which it is meant to apply. The inner beauty of a proverb relates to its ability to drive home important value which the speaker wants to pass across to the audience. The audience on its own part is expected to have the mental capability to grasp what is being passed across it. Thus, proverbs encourage behaviours that are in tune with the norms, beliefs and practices of the society and discourage the ones that are against them. Some proverbs encourage cooperative attitude and invariably discourage selfish attitude: *Otun we osi, osi we otun lowo fii mo* (hands get cleaned when the right and the left wash each other); *ai rinpo lo je omo ejo niya* (the young snakes suffer because they refuse to walk together). Other proverbs discourage selfish behaviour: *agba to 'je ije aiwehin ni yio ko abo re dele'* (an elderly

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person who consumes all the meal served to her will herself pack the plates). Some proverbs stress the importance of humility, especially in relation to leadership: '*eniti o le se bi alaaru loyingbo, ko le se bi Adegboro loja oba*' (A person who cannot behave like a servant in Oyingbo (local market in Lagos) cannot be lifted up in the king's (sophisticated market). This means that a leader should be regarded as a 'servant' of the people even when he/she enjoys the spoils of leadership.

Music/songs (*orin*) is an important art from among the Yoruba. According to Levinson music is "sounds temporarily organized by a person for the purpose of enriching or intensifying experience through active engagement (e.g. listening, dancing and performing) with the sounds regarded primarily, or in significant measure as sounds,"[28] Within the Yoruba context, the function of music goes beyond mere listening, dancing and performing to the sounds of music; rather it is meant to induce a particular (ethical, social, courageous) behaviour on the part of a given hearer or audience.

Music is capable of effecting change in behaviour or action of a person to whom the music is intended may give two examples of what we are saying here from Fagunwa books: *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale* and *Igbo Olodumare*. In the first of the two books, *Olohun Iyo*, one of the Courageous Seven (*Akoni Meje*) who volunteered to travel to Oke Langbodo for the well-being of their State, used his melodious song to overwhelm *Eru*, who cannot be defeated by bullets and arrows of the most powerful among the group, *Kako, Onikumo Ekun*. By the same token, *Olowo Aye*, in the second book, having engaged *Esu Kekere Ode* in a seemingly no win fight decided to sing a song that is capable of inducing a compromising attitude in *Esu Kekere*

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[28] Jerrold Levinson, " On the Concept of Music." In David Goldblatt and B. Lee, eds., *Aesthetics: A Reader in Philosophy of the Arts* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2005), pp. 229-233.

Ode As a matter of fact, both occasions worked in favour of Ikara Ogun and Olowouye: Eru ran away from the Courageous Seven and Esu Kekere Ode made peace with Olowo Aye These two examples illustrate the Yoruba saying that: ohun rere la nyo obi lapo. ohun buruku a yo ofa ninu apo. (Good exchange draws a kolanut [gift] from the pocket and a bad one draws an arrow from its sheath). There are other examples of songs by musicians like Sunny Ade (FESTAC 77); Ebenezer Obey(Operation Feed the Nation) Fela Anikulapo Kuti (Zombie, Yellow Fever) Lagbaja (Democracy); Hubert Ogunde (Yoruba Ronu) that have drawn attention to social and political issues in Nigeria. Songs that remind persons to be of good behaviour are also common among Yoruba musicians, for example, Orlando Owoh's *Asaro Elepo Rederede*. Many films that have been produced by Adejumo (Baba Sala) are also ethically and politically relevant to the experiences of the Yoruba people.

Oratory is another art form that has been used, especially by politicians to appeal to the conscience, and sometimes to the emotion, of voters in order to make political decisions. In the First Republic in Nigeria, politicians made use of the oratory form of artistic expression to draw the attention of the electorate to certain significant occurrences in their experience which are capable of making them to rethink their loyalty to a particular party that they had always embraced. Thus Late S.L. Akintola, a former Premier of the Western Region in Nigeria, when campaigning in Ekiti, a province in the Old Western Region of the country that was noted for its academic achievement in producing many professors, referred to some of these professors by their names which borne resemblance to the names of some birds: 'Professor Aluko, Professor Igun, Professor Atioro.' Apart from the aesthetic appreciation of this device of campaigning, the essential lesson being put across by Akintola was the reaffirmation of Bacon's view that 'knowledge is power' and

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that it was time for Ekiti people to look inwardly and regard educational attainment not only in terms of paper qualification, but also in relation to the social and economic benefits which should accrue from such attainment. It should be noted here that despite the high level of literacy among the Ekiti people, the area still remains one of the most socially and economically underdeveloped in Nigeria.

Iwa and *Ewa*: Implications for Political Leadership in Africa

The suggestion here is that political leaders in Africa, exhibit outer beauty (*ewa ita*) to the detriment of (*ewa inu*) in their act of governance. This outer beauty is exemplified in very expensive garments, jewelleries and other kinds of dresses that will make them glamorous. They also sometimes embark on white elephant projects which are not of much relevance to the welfare of the people. African leaders rarely exhibit the character of *omoluabi*. They do not keep their promises to the electorate; they rig elections; they are selfish and divisive in their ways. African leaders lead in accordance to the Machiavellian view that "the end justifies the means."

That most African leaders do not exhibit the character of *omoluwabi* is confirmed by their attitudes toward public funds. Public funds are systematically looted; they are mismanaged and diverted to private accounts, especially overseas accounts. All these actions and activities are at variance with *ewa inu* (inner beauty or character). Our position then is that political leaders should combine both outer beauty (*ewa ita*) with inner beauty (*ewa inu or iwa*) in order to realize the *iwa* (existence/purpose) of leadership.

Political leadership is both an art and a vocation. Political leadership is a process by which a group of persons (leaders) serve other persons (followers). As an art form, there are certain things that are expected of leaders in order to justify their

leadership Such expectations are connected to the purpose of politics Politics is about improving the quality of human life Political leadership then is about putting in place by a person or groups of persons those things that improve the quality of human life However, there are different aspects of human life - physical, psychological and spiritual Human life is greatly enhanced when there is harmonious working of these three aspects. What needs to be emphasized is that the elements of these aspects of human life differ from culture to culture and the suggestion is that for political leadership to be effective in the improvement of human life there is the need to be familiar with the ontology of the *iwa/* existence of the person. This, in other words, is to suggest that politics has its groundings in metaphysics, for it is when we fully understand the ontology of the person that we would be able to know what are required to satisfy his/her needs.

As previously discussed, the Yoruba notion of person comprises of an outer aspect (*ara*) and an inner aspect, (*inu*). These two aspects can be classified as *lewa* (beautiful) depending on the extent to which the items that constitute these aspects function in order to enable the person to realize his/her existence (*iwa*). However, unlike the predominant Western view which makes a bifurcation between the outer and the inner aspects of persons, the Yoruba notion of person sees the two aspects as interlaced. This does not imply that *ara* cannot be distinguished from *inu,* but that they work together in a harmonious way to produce a complete person - *omoluwabi*. Thus even when the Yoruba prefer inner beauty to outer beauty, a situation in which both of them are in tandem with one another is best preferred.

What political leadership entails therefore is the ability of persons (leaders) to understand this notion of a person and what his/her needs are and be familiar with the kind of actions and institutions that can facilitate its realization and the willingness to put these things in place for the improvement of

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human life in an equitable manner. The improvement of the quality of human life is based on some universal needs that are common to all human beings, but of which culture can interprete differently. Thus it has been held that human needs include material, like food, clothing and shelter and the psychological like freedom, equality and security. Human life will be greatly improved when these two types of needs are balanced with one another.

Political leadership is a normative enterprise. Therefore, it is only about directing persons along the line of action that can satisfy egoistic ends; rather it is about engaging persons the means of fulfilling the purpose of their existence (*iwa*). This engagement involves the principle that persons are ends in themselves and that they should be treated as such. A situation where persons are used as mere means to ends, for instance as political thugs to harm opponents in order to attain political positions is disruptive of human ends and politics.

Political leaders, in the strict sense of the term, will be a person who possess *ewa ara* (outer beauty) and *ewa inu* (inner beauty) and who are willing to use these attributes for the improvement of the lives of the persons they lead. This requires them to be *omoluwabi,* (good person) to the core. An *omoluwabi* political leader is a person who is eloquent at making promises and is also willing to fulfill them. On their part, followers are also required to possess a questioning mind, and they should be able to question their leaders in situations where such leaders renege on their promises. An *omoluwabi* political leader is one who recognizes the value of cooperation and therefore does not use politics to divide the people.

The present situation in Africa where political leaders use their influences to carve the population into garrisons for their selfish ends is not acceptable as good politics. A political leader should possess an inner beauty (*ewa inu, eri okan*) to the

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effect that she should know that it is not right to corruptly enrich himself/herself with the tax payers' money. Corrupt enrichment is a defeat of the purpose/existence (*iwa*) of politics, for when the treasury is corruptly emptied, there is going to be lack of resources to improve the quality of human life.

In consonance with the harmony of aspects theory of the person, political leadership should aim at the type of education which combines knowledge and wisdom (*imo ati oye*). The attributes of Imodoye, one of the Courageous Seven in Fagunwa's *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale* is very apposite here. Imodoye is a person who is knowledgeable about human and non-human universes; he is reflective and is willing to use his wide experience to bear upon new experiences in order to convert negative and disappointing experiences to positive and benefiting ones. An Imodoye leader is a person who is not only formally educated but who is able and willing to use her education to her own improvement and the improvement of her relationship with others and the state. Such a citizen can only be produced by the education that is culturally and existentially oriented. Political leadership , should inculcate in citizens the importance of leisure. Consequently; political leaders should establish institutions for recreation and leisure. Apart from recreation, such institutions will bring together persons from different workplaces to interact with one another in order to produce a harmonious polity where citizens can work together for the improvement of the quality of human life. Leisure enables people to reflect, unencumbered, on *iwa* and *ewa* and their involvement in the evolution of the virtues.

Conclusion

What has been shown in this paper is that the axiological system in Yoruba thought enjoys some stability, in contrast to its Western counterpart. Thus, when Yoruba axiology is predicated upon the Yoruba world view that the elements in the universe are

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interrelated. Western axiology depends upon the system of thought that prevails at a particular point in time. It might be the case that this is somehow a plus for Western system of thought in the sense that it avoids absolutism and trans-historical judgments: the disadvantage is that it does not allow for enough stability and predictability of the value system within the tradition. This has accounted for why persons and institutions are always acting in ways that promote their (selfish) interests at a particular point in time. No wonder then that Western institutions are always acting upon Machiavelli's aphorism, "the end justifies the means".

However, within the African tradition, of which Yoruba is an example, there are always identifiable criteria that stipulate who a good person, a good leader, and a good institution are. The criteria are not always formal, but arise out of the experience of the people. By experience here, we do not mean only sentiment and ongoing experience, but experience that has resulted from various interactions of the people with their traditions in the past. This has allowed the people, for example, to identify who an *omoluwabi* is and who is *asiwaju rere* (good leader).

It has been suggested in the paper that criteria for identifying good persons and good leaders are both external *(ewa)* and internal *(iwa)* and that the manifestation of these two aspects in a person or a leader is the necessary and sufficient conditions for according respects because such person or leader has functioned properly in accordance to his/her existence *(iwa)*. The point being made in the paper therefore is that persons, political leaders and political institutions should be evaluated by the degree to which they are able to combine both the external and internal virtues that make up the human person and the willingness to use these virtues for the improvement of the self, others and the political community.

A Review of
African Philosophy through Ubuntu. By Mogobe B.
Ramose (208 pages Mond Books. Avondale, Harare. 1999)

By
Ogbo Ugwuanyi, PhD.

*Therefore we are presenting as it were, African philosophy
through the voice from within... the imperative of the
authentic liberation of Africa requires neither speculative
apologia nor an interminable obsequious defence of being
an African.*

- Mogobe B. Ramose,
*African Philosophy through UbuntuWande Abimbola
ed,* pp. iv-v

With these introductory verse, Mogobe Ramose presents a
critical and reflective work that would challenge preceding
attempts in the discipline of contemporary African philosophy.
One of the challenges of contemporary African philosophy has
been that of moving the discipline forward by way of
philosophising from the African point of view in a manner that
would give African identity to philosophy. This challenge has
many dimensions: first is that of presenting the underlying logic
in African rationality as a way of providing the basis for a firm
belief in African personality. The second is that of placing this
rationality within the framework of contemporary relevance.
These challenges seem all too clear now. In dominant schools
of thought in contemporary African philosophy: the traditionalist
programme of ethno-philosophy: the critical current of thought,

the national-ideological school, the school of philosophical sagacity, we notice an attempt to defend African rationality. In all this however, there is a persisting crisis of thought that makes the exercise a descriptive exercise that does not enlarge the African mind properly to make philosophy an African property. It is against this background that we appreciate the urgency in Mogobe Ramose's work. *African Philosophy Through Ubuntu,* which attempts the meet this challenge. The work is a positive effort, which enlarges the African mind, projects African rationality and presents it as a reliable interpretation of truth as it obtains in other world culture. Questioning the logic that inspired colonialism in the first place as a fertile ground for launching his work. The author asks "why is it that one segment of humanity is unwilling to recognize the commonsense demand that even the colonized decolonized have the right to self defense?" (p. iii).

In exercise of this right of self-defense, the book goes further to speak for Africa. The book comes out in two parts. Part one, which could be described as the quest for African humanity and dignity, discusses the erosion of truth and knowledge by western thinkers who placed knowledge and truth in favour of western culture of hegemony and dominance. The author explains the background to this hegemonization and westernization of truth and knowledge in the intellectual racism of Europe and her allies who misinterpreted Aristotle's definition of man as an rational animal as being exclusive to European humanity. For these intellectual racists "man is a rational animal was not spoken of the African, Amerindian and the Australians" (p. 1) and hence these segments of humanity do not have a claim to reason.

This intellectual misconception of the African, the author argues, "laid down the foundation for the struggle for reason not only between men and women, but between the colonialists and

the African, the Amerindians and the Australians" (p. 1). By doing this, Europe and her cultural allies, "the self appointed heirs to the right to reason have thus established themselves as the producers of all knowledge and the authorities on truth. In these circumstances, the right to knowledge in relation to the African is measured and determined by passive as well as uncritical assimilation of issues coupled with the "faithful implementation of knowledge defined and produced outside Africa" (p. 3). This intellectual rape on African reason formed the background to other misfortunes in Africa's relationship with Europe, the classic example of which was colonialism. "If the colonized are by definition without reason, then it may be justified to turn them into slaves" (p. 7), "after all, a man without reason is a beast in season" (p. 12). But this is wrong as it is denigrating to African humanity. Hence the author sees his effort as an attempt to correct this evil. He conceives his effort as a moral imperative since "this struggle for reason is fundamentally a moral struggle as well" (p. 8). He discloses the poverty of racism and the idea underlying the western idea of Africa and categorizes western racism into three: philosophic racism, historical racism and spiritual racism.

An elaborate treatment of these categorizations constitutes the next phase of the work. Philosophic racism (pp. 13-17), the author states, is inherent in the works of western philosophers such as Locke, Kant, and Hegel who worked to ensure that reason is defined to the advantage of the West and "made no small contributions to the philosophical racism in the West" (p. 15). Spiritual racism (pp. 18-20) exemplified in the work of Isaac La Peyree, the French religious writer believes that "the God who created Adam and Eve could not have been and was not the creator of the African, the Amerindians and the Australians" (p. 18). Historical racism (pp. 20-31) a continuation of spiritual racism is evident in the works of the German philosopher, G. W.

F. Hegel whose "testishisation of the Germanic world by way of appeal to Christian religion" (p. 21) distorted world history by his attempt to define world history to the advantage of Europe and to the detriment of Africa. These include: his attempt to severe Egypt from Africa. (p. 26) and to exclude other segments of humanity from the sphere of rationality proper, Europe being the end of history (p. 30) and his effort to present history as divine theology (p. 31) revealed in the Christian religion." Hegel's unilinear .conception of history together with the racialist hierocracy deriving from his geopsychology" the author argues, "contributed to the advancement of both European political and spiritual imperialism" (p. 34). He argues further that racism in Africa belongs to the genealogical tree with its deepest roots traceable to western philosophy (p. 35) and calls on the African philosopher "to face the problem of racism in Africa and beyond" (p. 35).

In the second part of *African Philosophy Through Ubuntu* (pp. 49-205) the author attempts to present Ubuntu a key regulative concept or African philosophy with particular reference to the Bantu-speaking peoples of Africa. Here the author presents the polarized nature of reality in the western world and argues that this is the basis for the fragmentation of truth and reality. He argues that this is not the case for the African. He raises a new ontology for the world of philosophy through the idea Ubuntu and insists that "Being and Becoming are not to be opposed one to the other; they express two related aspect of reality (p. 55).

Through a direct translation of the word itself as coming from the prefix *'ubu'* and "which implies *being* in general and is oriented forward unfoldment, that is, incessant, continual concrete manifestation through particular forms and modes of being" (p. 50), the author confesses the inadequacy of the English Language as a weapon for projecting the idea of *Ubuntu* to the universal world of philosophy, but "although the English Language does

not exhaust the meaning of this maxim or aphorism, it may nonetheless be considered to mean that to be a human being is to affirm one's humanity by recognizing the humanity of others and on that basis, establish human with them (p. 50). '*Ubuntu*' the author elaborates, "not only describes a condition of being, in so far as it is indissolubly linked to *umuntu* but it is also the recognition of being becoming and not, we wish to emphasize being and becoming" (p. 52). To present a credible ground for what would follow, a multidimensional interpretation of *Ubuntu*, in an attempt to establish it as the ontological foundation of African philosophy, the author articulate the Pan-African distribution of the idea of *Ubuntu* and notes that in terms of geographical demarcation the *Ubuntu* philosophy goes from the Nubian desert to the Cape of Good Hope and from Senegal to Zanzibar (p. 62). He also insists that the word has similarities in other African Languages such as the Shona Language of Zimbabwe.

The author presents Ubuntu as (1) the ontological foundation of unity and one-ness in Africa (2) the ontological basis for African human-ness and (3) the strength of African philosophy. In doing this, he provides an insight to understanding *Ubuntu* as a reliable avenue (1) for Africanizing or humanizing a world that has lost touch with the human essence. He outlines these avenues in the succeeding chapters in a discussion of different avenue through which *Ubuntu* could be magnified: 'Religion through *Ubuntu*' (pp. 67-95) 'Medicine through *Ubuntu*' (pp. 96-101) 'Law through *Ubuntu*' (pp. 102-127) and 'Politics through *Ubuntu*' (pp. 128-148). He gives a careful treatment of these themes pointing out the ontological unity and equilibrium as that which stands at the basis of African philosophy.This ontological unity can be found through attunement to being" (p. 117).

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The last chapter of the book titled 'Globalization and *Ubuntu*' (pp. 160-195) examines the idea of *Ubuntu* in relation to globalization. It presents globalization as a paradox, of drawing and demolishing boundaries at the same time (p.16) and argues that globalization is a metaphor for the aspiration and the determination to render an idea or a way of life applicable and functional throughout the world (p.175). The author likens globalization to internationalization and universalization all of which share, "in practice the common aim to homogenize the globe" (p. 176).

African Philosophy through Ubuntu is a rich and loaded effort in contemporary African philosophy. The work is well-conceived and well-organized. There is a rich exploit of African indigenous world-view and wisdom all of which point the road to an African philosophical enquiry that is determined to demonstrate the possibility of an African philosophy from within. In addition, the work makes this philosophy relevant enough for the universal world of philosophy as it presents the therapeutic potentials of African philosophy to other worlds for philosophy notably western philosophy.

But the work could have been better if it had less abstract quality. One of the strongest arguments against western philosophy, which has served to promote the desire for alternative world philosophy, is its abstract character as a result of which it alienates man from truth. It is doubtful if a work that adopts abstract method of articulating philosophical truth cannot itself be supportive of this trend; and by so doing have undermined the very basis of its relevance as an alternative world philosophy.

Furthermore, there seemed to be conscious desire on the path of the author to apply concepts that are typically European that one could be left to argue a case of contradiction in the author who is clearly thinking for Africa from within and employing non-African concepts from without. This is amply demonstrated

by the use of such concepts as 'be-ing of an African' (p.49), 'It must cease becoming and remain only be,' (p. 55) 'the suffixes -ing' and ' ness present the idea of be-ing as a whole –ness' (p 57). One would expect a work which has the ambition of the author to apply western ideas and concepts, with a high degree of simplicity, avoiding by all means every temptation to a romance with the English Language: the kind that gives it celebrity in the mind. Finally some aspects of the work were built on quick logical platform that one could see the desire to establish conclusion over-riding, the desire for elaborate reasoning. This is evident in the section on 'Law through *Ubuntu*' (p. 102-127) and 'Medicine through *Ubuntu*' (p. 96-101).

A relevant work in African philosophy should attempt to carry the total weight of African experience transcending the racism that dictated the divide and at all times, aim at achieving a cosmopolitan dimension. This is much more the case, given the fact that a wrong univerlization of the particular, which preceded the intellectual encounter between Europe and Africa, did not apply to Africa alone.

Mogobe's work paradoxically recognized this (even when it did not stand above this position) when it stated that 'man is a rational animal was not spoken of the African, Amerindians and the Australians'(p.1). If this wrong denigration of reason took this wider shape then it is wrong for the African philosopher to persist in an unending reference to this theme as a point of departure for African philosophy. Indeed, a continued reference to this theme would even be more dangerous as it recognizes and consoidates it all the more.

Furthermore, this denigration of African reason is not an entire European position. While some notable minds of European civilization wrote in support of this idea some European scholars did not support this trend; and this to a large extent negates the universalism of this intellectual perjury. Jean-Paul Sartre in a

preface to Frantz Fanon's work *The Wretched of the Earth* had for instance indicted Europe along with Fanon in the following words: "Your humanism claims that we are one with the rest of humanity but your racist methods sets us apart." (Fanon 1976:8) In another section of the preface he wrote: "There is nothing more consistent about Europe than a racist humanism since the European has been able to become a man through creating slaves and monsters." (Fanon, 1976:22)

Whether Sartre was merely recanting Fanon's thesis in this preface may not bother us much. The mere fact that he conceded to do a preface to a biting anti-imperialist treatise such as *The Wretched of the Earth* attests to the fact that the misrepresentation of humanity evident in several works of European scholars which arguably, is an extension of the western hegemony and imperialism is not a communal European project and like all individual projects and positions, should be treated by addressing the individuals concerned. For this reason, it should not constitute a predominant thesis in African philosophical enquiry for which African philosophy should be made the opposite of European philosophy. Perhaps the persisting challenge in African philosophy remains how to achieve that that limits the influence of racism and colonialism in African scholarship, how not to make Africa the opposite of Europe in knowledge, arts and life . This state of mind, which stands close to what Kwame Anthony Appiah calls 'taking Africa for granted' (Appiah, 1985) is what I rather prefer to call raising the un-colonized mind.

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[1]   J.I. Omoregbe, *Knowing Philosophy* (Lagos: Joja Educational Research & Publishers Ltd, 1999), p. 30.

[2]   Benjamin B. Olshin, "The *I* Ching or 'Book of Changes': A Chinese Space-Time Model and a Philosophy of Divination", *Journal of Philosophy and Culture*, vol. 2, No. 2, (July 2005), pp. 17-21.

[3]   J.I. Omoregbe, op. cit., p. 50.

[4]   William Hare, "Open-Minded Inquiry: A Glossary of Key Concepts", available at http://www.criticalthinking.org/articles/open-minded-inquiry.cf. Last visit: June 04, 2008.

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THE NIGERIAN JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

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