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This Journal is not an organ of any particular Philosophical School of thought. It aims to be an outlet through which the results of scholarly researches in philosophy are made available to professional philosophers both within and outside Africa, and a forum for the exchange of philosophical ideas. The Journal therefore encourages and welcomes scholarly research in any branch of philosophy. Book reviews and advertisement are also welcome.

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Notes on Contributors

Idjakpo Onos Godwin is lecturer in the Department of Philosophy, Edo State University Ekpoma.

Dr. O. R. Adeniyi is a lecturer in Department of Philosophy, Ondo State University Ado Ekiti

Dr. Jim Unah is an Associate Professor Department of Philosophy University of Lagos.

Dr. G. O Ozumba is a lecturer in the Department of Philosophy, University of Calabar.

S. Olayinka Opafola lecturer Department of Philosophy, Ogun State University Ago-Iwoye.

Dr. Mrs E. O. Kehinde a lecturer Department of Philosophy University of Lagos.

Dr. Olusegun Oladipo Senior lecturer Department of Philosophy University of Ibadan.

Godwin Azenabor lecturer in the Department of Philosophy, University of Lagos.

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THE PROBLEM OF EPISTEMIC TRUTH

BY

Idjakpo Onos Godwin
Dept. of Philosophy
Edo State University
Ekpoma

Introduction:

What is truth? Pontius Pilate was one of those who first raised this fundamental question. It is commonly believed that the philosopher who concerns himself with 'truth' is best suited to answer the question. Many definitions have been given as answers to the question of the meaning of truth and these answers are said to constitute the theories of truth. We have the correspondence, coherence, pragmatic and semantic theories of truth among others. Conceptually speaking, do these theories really answer our question? If not, What does the question 'what is truth' really entail? Right from Aristotelian period there has been a fundamental disagreement over what truth really means. This lack of consensus over the question of the meaning of truth constitutes a big epistemological problem for philosophers who concern themselves with truth. But there are some philosophers like Ramsey and Ayer who believe that there is really no separate problem of truth as it is ordinarily conceived.

The aim of this paper is therefore to examine whether the problem of truth in epistemology exists or not. Our position is to argue for the existence of the problem and proffer some solutions for resolving it.

The Problem of Epistemic Truth:

According to Ramsey¹ in his essay "Facts and Propositions", the problem we think we have in relation to the question 'what is truth' lies in our inability to analyse judgements or statements correctly. Said he "if we have analysed judgements, we have solved the problem of truth"². Let us briefly consider his view in regard to the claim that there is no separate problem of truth as it is ordinarily conceived. According to F. R. Ramsey, statements with truth locutions can be analysed 'salva veritate'

and- without loss of meaning, into statements which lack truth and falsehood. In other words, statements with truth locutions can be analysed where truth and falsehood would be redundant. Ramsey considers two sorts of sentence to which truth and falsehood may be predicated. First, he considers sentences which are explicitly stated. For example, if I assert that 'it is true that' means the same as "Benin City is the Capital of Edo State". Similarly, if I assert that 'it is false that Caesar was murdered' my assertion means no more than "Caesar was not murdered". Thus, one may generalize from instances of these examples and conclude that the statement "it is true that P" is merely an expanded version of the statement that "not P"³. In other words if I assert "yes, that is true", or "No, that is not true" in reply to a statement made by my younger brother, what my assertions imply is that I am in a situation of agreeing or disagreeing with what my brother had just said. The words 'true' and 'false' as here employed, according to Ayer, are not eliminable or at least in a straight forward way. Thus, unlike Ramsey's Ayer believes that the words 'true' and 'false' can, in this way, function as predicates. In other words, there is a sense in which one can reassert a statement of which one predicates truth. But this may not always be so for there, according to Ayer, are instances where a person's statements which he has made can be true on the basis of the speaker's "treatment honesty" as Ayer puts it:

What I am doing in such a case is to give a blank cheque, as it were, to the person in whom I am reposing confidence.⁴

Similarly, a first-person account can be analysed in the same way according to Ayer. For example, if I say, 'forgot what I told you, but I know that I would not lie to you; so whatever I said, I am sure that it was true', I am thereby reaffirming my general honesty in dealing with my interlocutor⁵ so according to Ayer in his book: *Language Truth and Logic*, when the question 'what is truth' is considered, it would be found that it is not a question that gives rise to any genuine problem. He seems to say that even when the problem of truth exists, such a problem

will not be difficult to solve. Ayer thinks that the reason why some philosophers believe in a genuine problem of truth is because of the failure of such philosophers to properly address the issue involved in the problem of truth. Instead of such philosophers addressing themselves to the definition of truth, they are concentrating on looking for a general criterion of truth. To Ayer, this amounts to making inquiry into the cause of what makes statements true instead of defining statements directly. Ayer believes that the problem of truth is not located on how to find scientific explanation to what statements are true or not. He seems to think that we cannot significantly ask for a general criteria of truth. Ayer then conclude that inspite of his concessions by way of slight disagreement with Ramsey's view, his position still vindicate his claim that there is no separate problem of truth.

Both Ramsey and Ayer identify the problem of truth with the problem of the analysis of judgements or statements. Professor Wiredu shares this view but he goes beyond the mere analysis of judgement by positing that the problem of the analysis of judgement transforms into the problem of how we come to make judgements, that is the nature of inquiry.⁶ In other words, an improper analysis of judgements can lead to a truncated account of the nature of inquiry. This is due to the fact, Prof. Wiredu argues, that if we take the problem of truth to be the same as the provision and explication of a criterion of truth, then it would be difficult to give a general criterion of truth. It could be argued that to give a general criterion of truth is to expound a theory of truth and this is exactly what the correspondence and the semantic theorists have done respectively. In criticizing Ramey, we shall rely on Professor Wiredu's insights. But before that, we shall quickly point out that Ramsey's 'redundancy' theory is untenable on the ground that, if I say "it is true that Ayeni is hardworking" which means the same as "Ayeni is hardworking" for example, the question which this elicits is, how do we come to have the concept of truth, given the information my assertions convey? Does it mean one has made an unnecessary reduplication of effort in this regard? Ramsey might object by saying that when it is said that "it is true that Ayeni is hardworking", no new assertion over and above "Ayeni is hardworking" is made. It could be argued that this kind of objection

arises from lack of adequate understanding of the meaning of what is meant when the words "it is true" is added to an assertion. The words, 'it is true' add some 'weight' to assertions, making them to be 'trustworthy'.

Following Wiredu, Ramsy confuses a primary judgement with a comparative judgement. To Wiredu, to say that a statement 'P' is true or false, presupposes that the statement is antecedently available. Wiredu calls 'P' the primary judgement and 'P is true' the comparative judgement. Wiredu makes a distinction between the two judgements. For example, to say that 'Caesar was murdered' and "Caesar was not murdered" does not detract from the fact that two assertions already have truth - value assignments. It should be noted that the affirmative statement 'Caesar was murdered' has the truth-value 'true' while the statement 'Caesar was not murdered' has the truth-value 'false', therefore to prefix the phrases with "it is true" and 'it is false' Wiredu argues, which might have carried the indices of truth-value assignments, is to corroborate or not, the primary truth-value assignments. In addition, Ramsey's view seems to miss the mark for the words 'true' and 'false' cannot be easily eliminated, for statements 'true' and 'false' play important roles in our daily life. Besides, most arguments are rendered in statements, with truth - locutions. If 'true' and 'false' were to be redundant, such arguments could not have arisen in the first place. To say that truth is redundant implies that the quest for the solution to the problem of truth which philosophers are looking for is meaningless. Ramsey and Ayer's positions therefore, have no relevance to the problem of truth in epistemology. Following Leslie Armour and Russell, one cannot but disagree with the view that, as ordinarily conceived, there is no separate problem of truth.

The problem of truth arises because of the existence of human beings who hold beliefs. It could be argued that if there were no human beings to hold beliefs, the problem of truth would not arise. In real life we hold certain beliefs to be true and others to be false. We could not have been able to differentiate between true beliefs and false ones, if there were no concept of truth. In other words, it is the knowledge of the notion of truth that enables us to take certain beliefs as true and others false. Beliefs are in turn expressible in language. What we

experience in the world themselves are neither certain or doubtful. It is when we attempt to report them, to record or forecast them, to devise theories to explain them, that we admit the possibility of falling into error, or for that matter of achieving truth.⁷ Language is phenomenon that is deeply rooted in the culture of the people. Some languages are considered 'richer' than others. With these factors, the conception of truth in one language may vary slightly from that of another language. In all, there seems to be three identifiable factors, following Leslie Armour, in the situation which gives rise to the problem of truth. Firstly, the existence of a world 'peopled' by 'facts' about which the truth is to be rendered or told. Secondly, the existence of judgements and beliefs and the language in which the truth is to be told and thirdly, the person who is to tell it. The third factor relates to the objectivist character of truth.

Theories of Truth:

Having shown the poverty of Ramsey and Ayer's claim that there is no genuine problem of truth as it is ordinarily - concerned, and also having identified some factors that give rise to the problem of truth, we submit that there is need for a theory or theories of truth to 'solve' the problem. But before - identifying such a theory, we shall state briefly what such a theory should regard as its truth -bearer. We shall then state the conditions required for the formulation of such a theory.

There is the problem of what a theory of truth should adopt as its truth-bearer. The question of what should constitute a truth-bearer is as controversial as the question 'what is truth' itself. However, the most easily acceptable truth-bearers are beliefs, statements and propositions. Sentences are not easily acceptable as truth-bearers. To Strawson, it is even improper to speak of sentences as being true or false. The reason is, he believes, that if sentences were true or false, then it means "some sentences would be sometimes true and sometimes false."⁸ Another reason Strawson advanced is that some sentences especially the declarative types, are not capable of truth or falsity. For this reasons, Strawson maintains that not all sentences could be true or false. The reason why statement and beliefs are favoured over and above sentences is that statements for instance, are capable of being true and false while sentence save not. It is further generally believed that sentences

cannot be truth-bearer - unless they are first used to make statements.

The view that statements or propositions are truth-bearers elicits the question: what do we mean when we say that a particular statement is true? The question may be answered by saying that we attribute a property to statements when we say they are true. But which kind of property? This second question cannot be easily answered. This could be the reason why P. F. Strawson argues that truth cannot be a property of anything, say statements or beliefs. Strawson is of the view that the word 'true' is used to confirm statements already made. In other words, the word 'true' performs confirmatory functions in regards to statements but the question is, how is the condition which the word 'true' is to be properly used known? Whatever is said about the use of the word 'true', the question about the condition under which it could be properly employed would always be asked. A theory of truth that purports to solve the problem of truth must at least be prepared to take into consideration beliefs, statements or sentences as its truth-bearer. Also such a theory must fulfil certain minimum conditions for it to be properly accepted as an adequate theory of truth. In discussing the conditions, I shall rely on the insights provided by Bertrand Russell and O'Connor; let us now consider the conditions.

Firstly, following Russell, a theory of truth must be such as to admit of its opposite, falsehood.⁹ Truth is normally contrasted with falsehood and a theory of truth must endeavour to preserve the contrast between truth and falsehood.

Secondly, taking cue from Russell, a theory must make belief its truth-bearer. This condition in a way stresses the human element of the notion of truth. Human beings hold beliefs as already pointed out. Human beings also pass judgements on issues. The problem of truth would not have arisen if there were no human beings to make and pass judgements. As Russell puts it, "a world devoid of matter and consequently no beliefs or statements would contain no truth or falsehood"¹⁰

Thirdly, also borrowing from Russell, is that though truth and falsehood are properties of beliefs and statements, for a belief and statement to be true, it must be in virtue of something other than the belief or statement itself. As Russell pointed out, 'truth and falsehood are

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properties of belief to other things, not upon any internal quality of the beliefs"¹¹. What Russell means by this is that 'truth and falsehood are extrinsic, not intrinsic properties of beliefs and statements'¹². The advantage the third condition has is that it stresses that empirical truth should at least point - outwards at the world: Given Russell's view, Strawson's position that truth cannot be a property cannot be correct after all. For truth can be a property of beliefs.

And lastly, following O'Connor, a theory of truth must fulfil this condition: it must take into consideration that "truth and falsity belong once and for all to beliefs and statements"¹³. One possible interpretation of O'Connor's view is that "truth and falsity is not another cognitive or propositional attitude like corroboration, agreement or commitment"¹⁴. For a theory of truth to successfully deal with the problem of truth, it must fulfil the above minimum conditions. I shall now discuss in a nutshell, some of the theories of truth to find out which best answers the question "what is truth?" Some of the traditional theories formulated to deal with the problem of truth as pointed out earlier, are the coherence and the correspondence theories. Others are the pragmatic and the semantic theories of truth. We shall limit ourselves to the examination of two of these theories.

First with the coherence theory. The theory deals with the problem of truth by positing that the truth of a statement or proposition is dependent on its coherence with other body of statements or propositions. Thus, according to the theory:

To say that what is said (usually called judgments, beliefs or propositions) is true or false is to say that it coheres or fails to cohere with a system of other things which are said; that it is a member of a system whose elements are related to each other by ties of logical implication as the elements in a system of pure mathematics.¹⁵

Thus, testing what is said to be true is equivalent to testing its coherence with the whole system. This system to which all systems must cohere for the truth or falsity, according to Bradley, must be acceptable to mem-

bers of the scientific community. Thus, 'nothing can be called true unless it fits into one comprehensive account of the universe or reality which itself forms a coherent system'¹⁶. The coherence theory is beset with difficulties. The theory fails because it takes membership of a set as being the truth such that if it happens that a proposition fails to fit into such a set, it then means that it is false. The theory cannot be used to establish the truth of certain statements like "I have headache", "this food is delicious", "my teacher's car is in a bad state". The fact is that the truth of these statements does not consist in their coherence with a systematic body of truths as contained, say in human physiology or in general mechanics and so on. The statements are true or false not because we have coerced the statements with some absolute truth. The point is that we cannot use the coherence theory to explain the truth or falsity of such ordinary statements. Therefore, the coherence theory fails to address itself to the problem of truth. At best, the theory can be regarded as a 'test' theory used to test the truth or falsity of ordinary person's assertions or those of propositions in pure mathematics.

Unlike the coherence theory, the correspondence theory holds that truth is a relation of a belief and the fact of the state of affairs which exists in the external world. Consider the statement "Ayeni loves Luci" where there is an assumption that Dokpesi believes that Ayeni loves Luci. Following Russell, the statement has the following relations:

- (1) Ayeni's love for Luci;
- (2) Dokpesi, who believes that Ayeni loves Luci.

According to Russell, the relationship is ordered. He avers that any attempt to alter it, will make the relation to express another proposition altogether. Propositions are true, Russell further continues, if and only if, the things are orderly related and if the relationship, in this case, (that there is Ayeni, Luci and if Ayeni's love for Luci is true) then the proposition is true. But it should be pointed out that not all propositions are of the relational type and it is not always that propositions are analysed in this manner. Russell perhaps, recognizes this difficulty when he discloses that the "question of truth and falsehood is wrapped in unnecessary mystery owing to a number of causes"¹⁷. Russell himself identifies three of such causes. Firstly, he says people think that their beliefs are

more true than being false, thus when such people construct a theory of truth, they give prominence to truth than falsehood. Secondly, he says people use 'beliefs' and judgements' vaguely and thirdly, he concludes by saying that some people take truth as something to be adored and something noble. The correspondence theory also fails because it makes truth a relation. It should be noted that a relation does not explain anything but only shows how one thing is connected to another, so truth cannot be a relation. But the correspondence theory seems to agree more with our intuitive notion of truth than the coherence theorists' definition of truth. According to our intuitive notion of truth, a statement is true if it is in agreement with reality. The correspondence theorists claim that before a statement can be adjudged to be true or false, it must correspond to 'fact' or not respectively, is analogous to the Russelian condition that a theory of truth must enable us to distinguish between truth and falsehood.

Conclusion:

If we accept the correspondence theory as the most correct as Hamylin and Popper had done, in conclusion then truth cannot depend solely on its coherence with other bodies of judgements as pointed out by Bradley and Brand Bradshadt. Thus, the correspondence theory seems, sharing the optimism of Hamylin, the theory which offers plausible solutions to the problem of truth.

END NOTES

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- 4 Ayer, A. J. *The Concept of a Person*, Op. cit., p. 166
- 5 *ibid.*, p. 166.
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- 15 O' Connor, *Op. Cit.*, p. 16
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Phenomenalism As a Theory of Perception: A Critical Notice

By

Dr. O. R. Adeniyi
Department of Philosophy
Ondo State University
Ado-Ekiti

Phenomenalism is the thesis that physical objects are logical constructions out of sense data. The implication of this is that physical objects are not immediate objects of perception. Rather, they are arrived at by inference. The immediate or direct objects of perception are the sense data. Thus, sense data are thought to comprise the scope of empirical knowledge. As the only entities that can be known in perception, or the only ones known with any certainty, the common world of material objects which had been the starting point of analysis has ceased to be recognizable. Not only that, they had ceased to be reconstructible.¹

Many philosophers today are inclined to think that sense datum theory no longer needs autopsy but only embalment. Renowned men like Austin, Ryle and Wittgenstein are said to have signed the certificate of death for sense-datum theory. To these men, the programme of translating material object statements into assorted descriptions of sense-data is an impossibility. For example, Wittgenstein described the attempt to detach colour-impression from objects as though they were membranes.² To Ryle, it was a linguistic howler for sense-datum theory to skim an "ethereal" cream off ordinary lacuna descriptions of common objects.³ And for Austin, numerous facts about perception had been distorted in order to promote the interests of an immaterial something.⁴

This paper, therefore, critically considers the question whether there is any need for sense-datum analysis. Various objections that have been raised against the programme of translating material object-statements into assorted descriptions of sense data are briefly examined. The view that resulted from these objections, namely, sense-datum analysis need

never have existed in what I want to challenge. I take this view to amount to another one, namely there is essentially no philosophical problem of perception. I hold that the account of illusions, hallucinations and other similar phenomena about our sensory life, has a place in an adequate theory of knowledge. However, in what looks like a defense of sense-datum analysis I undertake in this paper, I am not committed to the view that material objects are nothing but sense data. My argument is that sense-datum language would do no more than complement material object language⁵

First, how plausible is the claim that physical objects are only by inference and hence the claim that they are logical constructions out of sense-data? It has been objected that we cannot by seeing certain patterns of colours and shapes infer that there is a pile of books on the table. What we see on the table are the books and both the table and the books are seen directly and not by inference. But the phenomenalist would answer by making explicit what he means by an inference in this case. He would distinguish the logical from the psychological meaning of inference and say he is using inference in the logical sense. Psychologically, the inference we make when we claim the existence of material objects cannot be recognised. But logically our claims about these objects is an inference. We make such claims only when we experience certain kind of sense data and we are able to relate it to others we have experienced before.

When we first come to the world, probably we saw only a round, bulgy patch in our visual field. But after a while when we continued to have similar experiences and they fell into orderly patterns, and after we found our visual sense data to be good indices of touch sense-data, we then needed to sense the red round patch to conclude that there is tomato.⁶ The phenomenalist further argues that physical object language is a stronger claim and takes much to defend than sense-datum language. The reason for this, it is claimed, is because physical object language is inferential and it requires more to back it up. But since we cannot be mistaken about the data of our sense, though we can describe them mistakenly, sense data are the only entities to be known in perception or the only ones known with any certainty. Physical object

reports are not indubitable⁷

Logically speaking, it seems to me that the phenomenalist claim is true. It is only by using the sense data we experienced as evidence that we claim the existence of physical objects. If, for example, we experienced no sense data of sight, touch, hearing and so on, we would never know anything about the physical world. Sense-datum language, in its orthodox use, seeks to elucidate judgements of perception, to show the consonance between sense experience and common knowledge. However, this does not mean that the common world of material objects, the starting point of sense-datum analysis, has ceased to be recognizable. Instead of neither questioning nor opposing the standards of objective knowledge, sense datum analysis only begins by adopting them in order to trace back the truth of common sense to their origin in those occasions when we claim truly to be perceiving material objects. It is only in this sense I think our sense data are the main access to that world.

The above claims do not commit one to the view that experiencing sense-data is to know things about that world. Sensing is not knowing; it is only a prerequisite for knowing. Knowledge is a combination of sensing and observing.⁹ There is a distinction between sensing and observing. Sensing is direct awareness of sense-data, that is, of colour patches, sounds, smells etc. Observing involves perceptual consciousness, a combination of sensing and a further mental act or process, the taking for granted or rational belief that there is present to the sense the material object specified by the sense data. The belief of the phenomenalist or any sense datum theory¹⁰ is that sensing is a fundamental form of knowing. The reason is that its essential features are immediacy or certainty. In the words of Price:

When I see a tomato, for example, I may doubt whether it is a tomato but I cannot doubt 'that there exists a red patch of a round and somewhat bulgy shape-viz, a sense-datum'¹¹

Hence, the phenomenalist or sense-datum theory in general is committed to the view that in perceiving, there is always an immediate incorrigible and so unvaryingly excellent awareness of an existent.

However, when we say that our sense data are the main access to the material world, we are not saying that physical objects are nothing but sense-data. This position offends the character of our experience and hence common sense. And according to Moore, "whenever analysis leads to a position incompatible with common sense, there was no alternative but to condemn the analysis, for the frame-work of common sense knowledge is a birth-right which it is impossible to sell."¹² This explains why various objections raised against phenomenalism have attracted the attention of many philosophers. The most fundamental of them is the problem of translation. It is the claim of the phenomenalist that statements about physical objects are reducible to statements about sense-data. Now, the phenomenalist can be asked the sense-datum equivalence of the statement, "there is a book on the table." The most the phenomenalist could do in this situation is to give a description of a certain sort, that is, a recipe for making such translation which no one could put into use. "There is a book on the table" would become, "there is a rectangular or red solid seeming shape on a rectangular seeming shape. Obviously, this description would not differentiate the book from any other object, say, chocolate box. To get out of this difficulty, the only option is to say that "there is red rectangular book-like sense datum on a rectangular solid table-like object. The implication is that sense-datum vocabulary must include physical object language. Hence, no pure sense-datum report can be made. Sense-datum language must therefore be parasitic on material object language

Given the problem of translation, phenomenalism is faced with another fundamental problem. If sensing is fundamental in perception, how do we describe objects which are not perceived at a given moment? According to J. S. Mill, matter is the permanent possibility of sensation.¹³ This suggests that sense-datum statements can only be translated into more hypothetical "If then statements. The mountain exists though unperceived, is translated to "if someone were to fulfil certain perceptual conditions he would perceive the seeming mountain like object. This means that sense-datum language must be stated as a subjunctive conditional. Phenomenalism is then open to the problem of counter-factual conditional. Analysis of counter factual conditional state-

ments into synonymous indicative statements is a problem of considerable importance.¹⁴ The philosophical problems which it involves are fundamental to metaphysics, epistemology and the general philosophy of science.¹⁵

Why did the phenomenalist pre-occupy himself with alternative objects of perception to those underwritten by the physical object language? The phenomenalist holds that the only thing we really know is what appears to be the case. So, we only perceive appearances. But can we identify what appears to be the case with our sense experience? A statement of what appears to be the case is rarely a description of sense experience. It is normally a modified, guarded claim about what is the case, expressing an inclination to believe something about objects. The ostensive firmness and incorrigibility of these assertions (statements of appearances) is a consequence of the modesty of the claim they make and not of their referring to a class of private, given entities. Statements of appearances do not express a special kind of direct knowledge by acquaintance nor are they premises from which statements about objects could be inferred. For they are not claims to knowledge at all. Rather, they are more or less tentative expressions of belief.¹⁶

This is not to say that sense datum language needs not exist at all. Its introduction is desirable for two reasons. The first is to make up for a lacuna in our inferential use of certain expressions. In this sense, it guides our use of specific adjectives to pick out individual qualitative aspects as they are being perceived. So, to classify an item of experience as a sense-datum amounts to applying a rule of restricted reference with regard to simple descriptive terms. Secondly, the vocabulary of sense-data marks off a portion of territory that is mostly taken for granted and not often talked about. Thus, sense-datum language is much neater than its distractingly clumsy rival (object language). It is indispensable for detailed phenomenological description.¹⁷

We can then say that phenomenalism as a theory of perception provides an account of how we verify the existence and characteristics of physical objects. We can verify that physical objects exist only because we experience sense-data. This fact cannot be denied. But it is not to confuse what something is with how we know it. It is only

means of sense experience that we can know that there are physical objects. This fact does not make sentences about sense experience equivalent to sentences about sense data. We need to be aware that there are different order of being. In the metaphysical order, that is, how things are, physical objects come before sense-data. If there were no physical objects, there would be no human beings to have sense experiences. In the epistemological order, that is how things are known, sense-data come first. Belief about the existence or properties of physical objects must find its verification in sense experience.

The epistemological order of being, however, must not commit us to the mistaken view that all that exist are sense-data. To be so committed is to be pre-occupied with perceptual experience at the expense of perceptual knowledge. This is the endemic fault of the phenomenalist. If the phenomenalist thesis is that only sense-data exist, the truth of common sense (the way we conceive the world, the character of what we experience) are enough to show that sense-data could not be conceived in any plausible analysis as the limit of what we know in perception. Therefore, the stumbling block to phenomenism is not the reality of material objects as such, but the reality of our experience. Discrete sensory particulars are not what we commonly take ourselves to be perceiving. The world of material objects is consecutive rather than momentary, cohesive rather than fragmentary, public and inter-subjective rather than private.

Equally true is the fact that we rarely use sense datum language to refer to the objects of perception. We do rarely refer to material objects by merely mentioning their qualitative aspects as they happen to be perceived. We tend to favour common nouns like tables, chairs etc. Even when objects are not being presently experienced, we do refer to the perceptible aspects of them. In our sensory experience what predominates are the kinds of items we identify as material objects rather than any inherent characteristics belonging to material objects. The recurrence and regularity of the items we experience are so pervasive that common sense applies the expression "material object" generously and without much concern for definition. The root difficulty of phenomenism is its inadequate and unfaithful description of experience. It over-

emphasizes the identification of discrete sense data and ignores the frequency with which we are able to identify the items we experience as material objects. Sense-datum analysis, based on the phenomenalist claim, cannot explain to us or even justify our common knowledge of the world. Sense-datum analysis must not be seen as an attempt to revise our established rules of description. Its usefulness consists only in the fact that they supplement our established rules of description. Sense-data vocabulary is nothing but mere extension of our linguistic habits which we are already familiar with. The language of sense-datum is ancillary to our ordinary object language. It is only in this sense I view sense datum analysis an adequate explanation of our knowledge of material objects.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 We must bear in mind that sense-datum analysis has often been resorted to because of a felt need to justify our ordinary judgments of perception. Our attempt to justify our knowledge of the world has produced diminished results concerning what it is possible to know. See for example A. J. Ayer's famous "argument from Illusion" in *The Problem of Knowledge*, Macmillan, London 1956, Chap. 3.
- 2 See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Trans G. E. M. Ascombe, Blackwell, Oxford, 1953, Para I 276, 400-1.
- 3 See G. Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, Hutchinson, London, 1949, p. 218.
- 4 See J. L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1962, p. 25.
- 5 There is need to distinguish between phenomenalism and causal theory of perception. Since both of them hold that what we immediately perceive are sense data, they are phenomenal realism. However, phenomenalism is phenomeal realism which is monistic. Causal theory is dualist realism.
- 6 See H. H. Price, *Perception*, Methuen, London, 1932, pp. 2-3.
- 7 A. J. Ayer in his defence of the incorrigibility of statements about sense experience holds that the only mistakes to which we are

liable in making such statements are verbal. The claim is not that sense datum report cannot be false. But in the absence of lying or some verbal error of describing, they are indubitable. They simply report what we are directly aware of in sense experience and no more. See A. J. Ayer, *The Problem of Knowledge*, *op. cit.* Chap. 3 esp. pp. 90-95.

8 See R. J. Hirst, "The Difference Between Sensing and Observing", *Proceedings of the Aristolian Society*, Supp. Vol. 28, 1954, pp. 97-240.

9 *Op. cit.* p. 98.

10 I have in mind here the "Causal Theory of Perception" which starts from the fact of material world to the devastating conclusion that such world is unobservable. See D. M. Armstrong, *Perception and the Physical World*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961.

11 See H. H. Price, *Perception*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

12 See G. E. Moore, "A Defence of Common Sense" in *Philosophical Papers*, London, 1954, pp. 55-56.

13 See J. S. Mill *An Examination of Sir Hamilton Philosophy*, London, Longmans, Green & Co. 1865, Cha II

14 See Nelson Goodman, *Fact, Fiction and Forecast*, Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc. 1965, pp. 9-25, see also the Problem of Counterfactual Conditionals" *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 44 1947, pp. 113-128.

15 See R. M. Chisholm, "The Contrary-to-Fact Conditional," *Mind*, Vol. LV, No. 220 Oct. 1946, pp. 289-307.

16 See Anthony Quinton, "The Problem of Perception," *Mind*, Vol. 64, 1953, pp. 28-51.

17 See R. J. Hirst, *op. cit.*, pp. 120-124.

WITTGENSTEIN ON THE TASK OF PHILOSOPHY

*The object of Philosophy is the logical clarification of thoughts -
Wittgenstein*

By
Dr. Jim I. Unah
Department Of Philosophy
University of Lagos.

INTRODUCTION

Right from the inception of Western thought, one of the attributes native to philosophy is its undogmatic analysis of concepts. Philosophical activity has helped in no small measure to clarify thoughts that were "cloudy and indistinct" with the result that certain obscure theories about the world and human nature have been elucidated. Plato's logical clarification of such concepts as "knowledge" and "justice" are typical examples of logical analysis. But is this the kind of analysis or logical clarification that Wittgenstein is talking about? To what extent have preceding philosophers really bothered with logical clarification of concepts? And granted that philosophers throughout the ages have shown concern for analysis of concepts, is this the only legitimate task of the philosopher? Does the claim that the sole task of the philosopher is logical analysis not amount to a narrowing down of philosophy and an impoverishing of it? Does the Wittgenstein stance not come down to an insistence on a single methodology of philosophy?

In this paper, I show that right from the inception of Western thought philosophers have shown some concern for logical clarification of thoughts. But I hasten to add that logical clarification of thoughts is not and should not be the only legitimate enterprise of philosophy. I show that even Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus* and Russell of the *Principia* did more than logical clarification of thoughts - they also propounded theories about what the world is, which I think is another legitimate concern of philosophy (i.e. metaphysics).¹ I therefore expound the thesis that

while Wittgenstein's proposition describes a partial task of the philosopher, it is simply arbitrary and impoverishing to insist on a methodology of philosophy which I think is what he has done in the *Tractatus*.

CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY

That a preoccupation with the way language is used in formulating and resolving philosophical problems² is an age - long concern of philosophy could be seen from the activities of Socrates in the Platonic Dialogues in which a thorough-going analysis of such concepts as "knowledge", "justice" and "virtue" is given. Similarly, Plato's criticisms of the prevailing epistemological views of his time in the *Theaetatus* is a typical example of critical philosophy into which analytic and linguistic philosophy are sometimes classified.³ Rene Descartes' Methodic Doubt in which he insisted on "clear and distinct ideas" is also a form of philosophical analysis. So too is Kant's criticism of speculative metaphysics in which he shows that a wrong application of the "categories of human understanding" breeds philosophical confusion another instance of "logical clarification of thoughts". Our nostrils are also assailed by the mouth-watering aroma of critical philosophy in Edmund Husserl's "Phenomenological Epoche" or "eidetic science" which urges a predispositionless analysis of experience or a return to pre-reflective consciousness.

But would these activities qualify as logical analysis in Wittgenstein's sense of the term? In the first place, analytic and linguistic movement in the current sense is a predominantly British Philosophy. Secondly, members of this movement, notably Russell and early Wittgenstein, have argued that the activities of preceding philosophers such as the ones mentioned above amount to "language on vacation". According to them, preceding philosophers have been misled by faulty grammatical forms into thinking that their utterances were a real contribution to knowledge. This delusion, they claim, arise from the heavy epistemological and metaphysical apparels in which their analyses were shrouded. Thirdly, contemporary linguistic philosophers have argued that the ordinary language with which preceding philosophers carried out their critical philosophy is imprecise, and so, it was difficult for them to appreciate the consequences of the theories they formulated. Finally, contemporary analytic and linguistic philosophers argue that what is called for, contrary to

orthodox philosophic practice, is a revisionary programme to reorganise the whole of natural language into a perfect artificial language such that utterances could be made to exhibit their proper logical forms.

Ironically, however, even with the analytic movement, many different kinds of activity have been lumped together as philosophical analysis or logical analysis. Among the so-called analytic philosophers, approaches to the study of language have been different. Some philosophers of the analytic tradition think that language should be re-organised in such a way that an ideal language which exhibited the structure of reality could emerge. These philosophers think that ordinary or natural language is not precise and that a well-revised artificial language would put an end to philosophical perplexity. Bertrand Russell and early Wittgenstein are typical representatives of this view. They both thought that *formal logic* could reveal in precise terms the real structure of any language. They attributed the existence of philosophical problems to the fact that philosophers often allow themselves to be carried away by surface grammar which is not apt to reveal the deep or real structure of any language. But G.E. Moore who is as much a pioneer of modern Analytic Philosophy as Russell is less inclined to employ the technical tools of *formal logic* in resolving philosophical puzzles. Instead, Moore thinks that the best way of resolving or unraveling philosophical puzzles is to ask what precisely the question is that generated the puzzle in the first instance. When this is done, Moore thinks, it will be crystal clear that there was no puzzle in the first place. Thus, Moore preferred beliefs in common sense in resolving philosophical issues to the use of "advanced formal logical as a means of solving traditional philosophical problems and believed that philosophical skepticism about the existence of an independent external world or of other minds - or, in general, about what men label as common sense - must be wrong."⁴

The point to make with all these illustrations about the different forms of philosophical analysis is that whether in the Socratic method or "Dialectic" or in Russell's *Principia*, what Wittgenstein has said about "logical clarification of thoughts" as the object of philosophy is only partially true.⁵ Philosophers have taken some interest in how language is formulated and used in their systems. Interest in language, has, however,

in the main, been indirect. When philosophy's interest is mainly directed at language as with the linguistic philosophers, it becomes a philosophy of language; when it is directed at the analysis of key concepts, it becomes analytic philosophy; when it directs its attention at the fundamental presuppositions and competing theories in a discipline say, Education, Law, Religion or Science, it becomes a philosophy of the infrastructure of these disciplines.

LOGICAL CLARIFICATION OF THOUGHTS

Now, what precisely does Wittgenstein mean by "Logical clarification of thoughts?" Does he mean that the sole task of the philosopher is the elucidation of the utterances of others without himself making any pronouncements whatever? In what sense should we really understand proposition 4.112 of the *Tractatus*? Let us restate the proposition once again.

Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity. A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations. Philosophy does not result in 'philosophical propositions', but rather in the clarification of propositions. Without philosophy thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and indistinct: its task is to make them clear and to give them sharp boundaries.

This proposition can be understood in two senses which are not totally unconnected with each other. The first sense is that the proper task of philosophy is analysis, and we shall say what analysis consists in on Wittgenstein's view. The second sense is that the philosopher should not propound theories about the world but should instead clarify and sharpen propositions and fix the boundary of human language i.e distinguish between what can be said and what cannot be said about the world. Now, if we are taken in by the contents of the *Tractatus*, analysis in Wittgenstein's View would be very much akin to what Russell has done in the *Principia Mathematica*. Analysis in the *Principia* as well as in the *Tractatus* consists in giving the out-line of a perfect language. For Russell the theory of grammar in the *Principia* is perfect because it

accurately mirrors the structure of the actual world. Russell argues that whenever we translate a sentence of ordinary English into this perfect logical language, its meaning becomes clear. If it turns out, upon such translation, not to be of the subject-predicate form, then, there is nothing that its grammatical subject will directly refer to, since in the perfect language every subject term will denote an actual object in the world, and every predicate term will denote an actual characteristic of that object. The classic examples of statements of the subject-predicate form and that of the non-subject-predicate form are, "Socrates is wise", and "The President of the United is Wise", and "The present King of France is wise" respectively. The first two statements "Socrate is wise" and "The President of the United States is wise" are of the subject-predicate types because the subject terms denote actual objects and the predicate terms fit actual characteristics of the objects. In other words, the descriptions are definite since they denote true state of affairs in the world. On the other hand, the statement "The present king of France is wise." may on the surface, appear to be of the subject-predicate type. On close scrutiny, however, it would be found to be faulty because there is no atomic fact to which the subject term refers.

Russell's guiding phrase is that a genuine utterance must describe a state of affairs in the world. An atomic sentence must describe an atomic fact because meaning is referring. But if one asks Russell to what state of affairs in the world is his "Theory of types" referring?, no answer would seem to be forthcoming. This difficulty is of precautionary importance to Wittgenstein, who following Russell his teacher, had published a famous book, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, in 1922 in which he enunciated his pictorial theory of language. According to Wittgenstein's account of his Picture Theory of Language, the ideal language pictures or mirrors the world⁶, just as a map mirrors it. If we wish to discover whether Ilorin is north of Lagos in Nigeria, for example, we can do so by referring to a map, since a map in a sense pictures the terrain. It pictures it because there is identity of structure between the points on the map and the points on the ground. A perfect language is like a map. It pictures the structure of reality.⁷ For every proper name in the language there is a corresponding entity, and for

every predicate a corresponding property. The ideal language gives us a structure of facts since facts are composed of objects and their properties.⁸

Thus, having established the correlation between the structure of facts and the structure of language i.e. "a logical picture"⁹ Wittgenstein insinuates in proposition 4.112 of the *Tractatus* that the proper task of the philosopher is analysis such as the kind done by Russell. By analysis or "logical clarification of thoughts" Wittgenstein means rewriting sentences of natural language in such a way that these sentences will exhibit their proper logical form. When they are put into their logical form their meaning will become clear and philosophical perplexity would vanish.

Both Russell's and early Wittgenstein's theories of language flourished in England in the 1920s and 1930s. The striking thing about the works (i.e. Russell's *Principia* and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*) is that they both hold that language mirrors or pictures reality. They both fall into revisionary programmes of language because they rest upon the common assumption that if our language is re-organised, if we have a standard logical form of describing how natural language works, then, all philosophical perplexities will be eliminated. In this, they both erred for two major reasons: One, our natural language is already organised, and no such millennial blueprints of language as the *Principia* and the *Tractatus* are called for;¹⁰ and two, a theory of language which repudiates metaphysics and the formulation of doctrines ended up being doctrinaire and metaphysical. We shall come back to this question of doctrine and metaphysics in the *Tractatus*. Before then we should make an important distinction between the *Principia* and the *Tractatus*.

If one scrutinizes properly, one discovers that the similarity between the *Principia* and the *Tractatus* to which we have alluded is merely superficial. For while the *Principia* enters into a pretense that the Theory of Description is the final court of appeal for the problem of ambiguity and obscurity in our daily utterances, the *Tractatus* does not make any such pretense. The latter merely says that there are certain things that can be said and certain other things that cannot be said but which can be shown. Again while the *Tractatus* suggests that the measures outlined in it can only be used to get out of the lower rungs of the ladder of

obscurity and confusion and that one should transcend the ladder and cast it away, the *Principia* makes the pretense that its Theory of Description is another decalogue which must be faithfully obeyed, and from which there must be no deviation. And whereas early Wittgenstein makes the following admission at the conclusion of the *Tractatus*: "My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way; anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them - as steps - to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it. He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright)",¹¹ Russell does not make any such admission anywhere in the *Principia*. Instead, he regards the theory of types as a kind of linguistic fiat to which all who seek the elimination of philosophical perplexities must subject themselves.¹²

DIFFICULTIES

Brilliant though it is, Wittgenstein's notion of "logical clarification of thoughts" is charged with a number of difficulties. It enjoins us, on the one hand, not to propound doctrines, but leaves us, on the other hand, with a theory of language which insists on rewriting sentences of ordinary language into an ideal one that would yield the marriage of atomic sentences with atomic facts - a severe doctrine at that. It forbids that philosophy should issue in universal true propositions, but leaves us with a cumulus of methodologically regulated propositions. The aim of Wittgenstein's notion of "logical clarification of thoughts" is to overcome metaphysics but it leaves us with the most sophisticated kind of metaphysics. How for instance, does Wittgenstein know that "The world is the totality of facts not of things?"¹³ And granted that such a thing as the "totality of facts, can be known, into what logical form does it fit? Is the assertion also of the subject-predicate pattern? If it is, what state of affairs in the world does the proposition refer to? And when he says in proposition (1) that "The world is all that is the case," which world is he referring to? Is it the Third World" or the "New World" or the "academic world" or the "business world?" Needless to say, this way of talking about the world in general and the "totality of facts" is fundamentally metaphysical. Furthermore, in propositions 2.022 and 2.023 Wittgenstein

even talks of an imagined world which, however different it may be from the real world, must still have something - a form - in common with it. And this fixed form is made up of objects.¹⁴ Now, Frank P. Ramsey thinks it is rather suspect that any imagined world must have all the objects of the real world even though on Wittgenstein's principles, if to say, "A exists" is nonsensical, "we cannot imagine that it does not exist, but only that it does not have some property." And Ramsey further wonders whether it is legitimate for Wittgenstein to talk of the "totality of facts" when he had elsewhere suggested "that it is impossible to say anything about the world as a whole, and that whatever can be said has to be about bounded portions of the world." Ramsey feels that even if the latter statement is wrongly attributed to Wittgenstein, he no doubt denied that one could legitimately speak of the number of all objects.¹⁵

Without going into sordid details, the point we illustrate here is that while philosophy may deal with the "logical clarification of thoughts", it also deals with something else. It deals with questions of basic assumptions, questions of fundamental principles and presuppositions and questions of ultimate reality be it in the affirmative or in the negative. As we have illustrated above, these metaphysical elements are found in the *Tractatus* either overtly or covertly, explicitly or implicitly. It is because of Wittgenstein's realization of the fact that some of the propositions in the *Tractatus* are laden with metaphysical undertones that he dismisses them as nonsensical. In other words, there is this singular admission at the end of the *Tractatus* that it does not seem possible to talk freely about the world without being infected by metaphysics. Therefore, after we have employed metaphysical nuances in explaining the world, we must, so to speak, discard with explanatory models immediately and shroud them in mystic silence, lest we be infected by the "great disease" of which philosophy must be cured. But how this "great disease" can be cured is not within the reach of prospect.

We are, however, aware that Wittgenstein has repudiated most of his views in the *Tractatus* in his later philosophical inquiries. In later Wittgenstein, "logical clarification of thoughts" no longer takes the form of rewriting sentences of natural language into a perfect language. It now takes the form of playing language-games. Philosophy's function is

no longer the sole task of elucidating the propositions of natural science, but one of treating "whatever subject that comes its way"¹⁶. In later Wittgenstein, philosophy not only explores the internal logic of what is said in the sciences, but also pries loose "the logic of all the things that all of us say"¹⁷. But whether in the *Tractatus* or in the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy remains essentially the same namely, that of exploring the internal logic of all that we say. Philosophy's function still remains, strictly speaking, the analysis of other theories. The philosopher is still forbidden from formulating theories and making pronouncements. So does Wittgenstein, throughout his philosophic career, insist on a single methodology of philosophy.

REMARKS ON CONCEPTIONS OF PHILOSOPHY

At this juncture, we want to make clear that we do not deny that logical analysis (whether in the Socratic-Platonic fashion or whether in the *Principia*, *Tractatus* or the *Philosophical Investigations*) is a legitimate enterprise of philosophy. What we cannot swallow, hook, line and sinker, is the view that language analysis is the sole task of the philosopher. It is simply arbitrary, and indeed an impoverishment of philosophy to insist that logical analysis is the only legitimate function of philosophy. Philosophy, it has been argued, is neither pure speculation nor pure criticism. There is no single methodology of philosophy, because "philosophers cannot arrive at the sort of conclusions which interest them by deductions from self-evident principles. Philosophy cannot have the same sort of general structure as natural science."¹⁸ According to Dilthey, "there is no necessary, inner unity in the history of philosophy. It only receives again and again different content and scope at the hands of the individual philosophers, always according to their conceptions of it in the contexts of their own systems."¹⁹ "A quick glance at the way in which philosophy is done in different parts of the world today," writes David Pears, "is enough to dispel any illusion of unanimity about its general nature and anyone who looks back into its history will find a bewildering variety of different conceptions of it."²⁰

Thus, in view of the diversity of conceptions of philosophy, we conclude that one merely takes sides in a philosophical dispute and indeed narrows down the scope of the discipline by insisting on a single

methodology or procedure of philosophy.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 It has even been argued that Russell's 'Theory of Descriptions' and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* embody the most sophisticated kinds of metaphysics. Though anti-metaphysical, the two works make pronouncements about what reality comes down to i.e. the world as totality of facts (See L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Trans. by D. F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness (London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962) p. 5. The argument that Logical Atomism - which Russell's Theory of Descriptions and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* have been reduced to - is an antimetaphysical metaphysics can be partially found in the article "Analytic and linguistic Philosophy" *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* vol. 1, 15 ed. U.S.A. Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1980, p. 804.
- 2 cf. Dr. S. B. Oluwole. "An Investigation into the Relationship Between Transformational Grammar and Logical Analysis" (M. A. Dissertation, Lagos, 1974) p. 54.
- 3 The view that philosophical analysis in the modern sense is exemplified in the Platonic Dialogues is substantiated in "Analytic and Linguistic Philosophy" *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* vol. 1, 15 ed. U.S.A. Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1980. p. 800.
- 4 *Ibid.* p. 802.
- 5 This may be a sweeping generalization considering the fact that Wittgenstein's proposition could mean something broader than analysis of sentences. If for instance, by "logical clarification of thoughts" Wittgenstein means plausible account of what we think about or what others think, then virtually all philosophies have it as their central mark, in which case Wittgenstein would be wholly and not partially correct. But if by "logical clarification of thoughts" he means elucidating only the thoughts of others or what have been thought by other people, say scientists, without saying something ourselves, then Wittgenstein would be partially correct, but

could at any rate, be shown to be largely in error. This manner of argumentation will be explored in our treatment of Wittgenstein's propositions.

For a flawless account of the Picture Theory of Language, see L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (propositions 2.12-3.0001), pp. 8-10.

Ibid. p. 8.

Ibid. pp.6-7 (especially propositions 2.0231)

Ibid. p. 10 (i.e. propositions 2.15 and 2.181)

0 This objection is the central point of Wittgenstein's later philosophy - that the creation of a perfect language which mirrors atomic facts or ultimate simples is an exercise in futility because there are no ultimate simples. Language can be adapted to multifarious uses. For more details. See L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford Basil Black-Well, 1974) p. 6.

Wittgenstein, *Tractatus* op.cit. p. 74 (proposition 6.54).

One should mention, by way of digression, that Russell's theory of sets which is a more technical and mathematical version of the theory of descriptions has led to paradoxes and arguments of the heterological pattern. It has further been charged with introducing a monumental blemish into mathematics. For details see J. Tucker, "Clashes Between Paradigms for Logic" *The Nigerian Journal of Philosophy* vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 91 -92.

L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, p. 5. (proposition 1.1).

Ibid., p. 7.

Ramsey's comments are contained in his article "Review of *Tractatus*" in *Essays on Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, ed. by I.M. Copi (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960) pp. 9-23.

cf. David Pears, *Wittgenstein*, (London: Collins and Sons Ltd., 1971), pp. 17-18.

Gilbert Ryle, "Ludwig Wittgenstein" *Essays on Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, pp. 6-7.

cf. Wilhelm Dilthey, *Essence of Philosophy* (New York: The

University of North Carolina Press; AMS Press inc., 1969) pp.
1-2.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

20 David Pears, *Wittgenstein*, p.18.

AFRICAN METAPHYSICS

BY

G. O. Ozuimba (Ph.D)
Dept. of Philosophy
University of Calabar

The subject of African metaphysics is a very broad and far reaching inquiry. This essay has two strategic hurdles to overcome. First, how can we meaningfully talk about African metaphysics? Second, how can we cover the breadth and depth of African metaphysics in one full swoop and for that matter in a short treatise like this? No work can claim to say all that needs be said on any given work is to have a clear vision of what is intended to achieve. It is in this light that we feel persuaded that these hurdles can be safely handled and overcome.

In response to the first hurdle, we wish to say that much has been said on different aspects of metaphysics. Metaphysics being dynamic, we cannot pretend to have a fixed corpus of perception and articulation which we call African metaphysics. What we attempt therefore to do is to carry out some intellectual stock-taking to see how we have fared in these intervening years. Defining the focus of our work will allay the fears of scholars like Paulin Hountondji who smell a rat any time attempt is made to talk of African philosophy as a static, collective and ideological set of beliefs which lie in the immutable soul of the African people. In his *African Philosophy - Myth and Reality*, he decried the vogue of perceiving African philosophy as a collective, of immutable and definitive beliefs which are abstracted from history and progress.¹ He says that our ideological definition of philosophy is what is normally called to use when examining African philosophy. This leads to our seeking philosophy as any kind of wisdom, individual or collective, any set of principles presenting some degree of coherence and intended to govern the daily practice of a man or a people.² As Wiredu and Oladipo have noted, ideology can be perceived both in a degenerate sense as "a set of ideas about what form the good society must take."³

We must state that our attempt is not directed at speculating on the

ideological roles of philosophy albeit, that of revamping the tradition of pontificating on a symmetrical cultural philosophy that is immutable, homogenous and hidden in the consciousness of the African peoples. This is also not to say that the unanimity question is totally baseless. A cultural philosophy must have certain underlying logic and understanding. However, it will be a mark of intellectual philistinism to continue to hold that all Africans conceive reality woof and weft from exactly the same perspective. What we have are similar out-looks which enjoy a higher semblance than with views outside the African sub-region.

Our target is to look at the "score board" to see how we stand with the spate of write-ups on African metaphysics or aspects of African metaphysics. This will enable us to count our gains and losses as we continue in this business of reconstructing African philosophy. This intellectual inventory will enable us to up-date our journey so far intellectually. If we do not take time to knot all our discussions together, we may soon discover to our dismay how irretrievably far a-field we have strayed in the wrong direction.

The second challenge facing this paper is to explain how we can cover the scope of African metaphysics within the ambit of this work. Our view is to x-ray some literature and then see how we can make very useful deductions from our study. This we see as feasible. But before we take off on this excursional exercise, we need to acquaint ourselves with what we mean by metaphysics and what our working definition for African metaphysics is.

WHAT IS METAPHYSICS?

Metaphysics has been defined differently by different scholars. Nevertheless, in whatever way it is defined, it should include the necessity for a universal outlook toward reality. The word 'metaphysics' which is said to have Greek origin is believed to have been first used in the 4th Century BC by the peripathetics. It was seen as the science of being-qua being. This means the study of reality from the point of view of other beings. Parmenides is often referred to as the real enunciator of Western metaphysics before Socrates, Plato and Aristotle gave it a more detailed and rigorous treatment. Down to Immanuel Kant, metaphysics became divided into three major parts, namely; rational

theology, rational cosmology and rational psychology.

Metaphysics includes but transcends the particularisms of individual existence to focus on the interrelationships of particulars within the universal. Metaphysics is therefore a philosophical outlook which tries to reach a more comprehensive, all-embracing, totalistic view of reality without neglecting the unique place of individual things in the holism of reality. This means that when we are talking about reality, we are referring to both disparate and homogenous outlooks. It may be an aspect of reality say properties, relations, individual beings or it could be the examination of being in a generic sense. What is important in each case is to reach general and fundamental assumptions that articulate a rationally acceptable world view as far as that sphere of reality is concerned. Michael Loux's edited book *Universals and Particulars: Readings in Ontology* captures the different areas of concern of metaphysics. A. J. Ayer has succinctly defined metaphysics as that branch of philosophical discourse which deals with the fundamental questions about the structure of reality.⁵

The etymological meaning of metaphysics holds that metaphysics is derived from the Greek words *Meta-Ta-Physika* meaning after physics or transcending the physical. Andronicus of Rhodes, the chronicler of Aristotle's works, is said to have named the work following Aristotle's work on physical nature as 'Metaphysics' because its content transcended the physical realm. Metaphysics is concerned with issues bordering on the extra-mental, spiritual, abstract, universal or transcendental. This makes metaphysics to be seen by some as a wholly rarefied discipline. But this is not totally the understanding metaphysics evinces. Like Immanuel Kant, we see metaphysics as concerning the totality of reality whether God as in rational theology or man, nature and the universe as in rational cosmology or mind and its ideas in rational psychology. However, these are not periscoped wholly through a prior concepts as some have opined but through the interplay of a *priori* and a *posteriori* concepts or through experience and reason. Metaphysics is a science that seeks ultimate understanding of reality.

Metaphysics is defined by Collingwood as the science of Pure Being and as a science which deals with the presuppositions underlying

ordinary science⁶. Its procedure is to ignore the differences between this individual thing and that individual and attend only to what they have in common. Metaphysics deals with the nature of existence. Metaphysics, being the study of reality as a whole, is concerned with the generalization of experience for the purpose of identifying fundamental entities.⁷ Metaphysics therefore involves a synthesis of all experiences in order to achieve a coherent whole which gives a complete picture of reality. It is in this latter sense that we intend to survey aspects of African metaphysics to see how the disparate metaphysical objects of the African people fit into a coherent metaphysical framework.

WHAT IS AFRICAN METAPHYSICS?

African metaphysics should be seen as the African peoples way of preceiving, interpreting and making meaning out of interactions, among beings, and reality in general. It is the totality of the African's perception of reality. African metaphysics will therefore include the systematization of the African man's perspective as it relates to being and existence. This will embrace the holistic conception of reality with its appurtenances or relations, qualities, characterization, being and its subtleties, universals, particulars, ideas, minds, culture, logic, moral, theories and presuppositions. African metaphysics is holistic and interrelated. The logic of their metaphysics underpins their standard and expectations. This is not to go with the impression that all African communities, share the same standard. But this standard is community based. Borrowing from Quine each community operates from a background theory that penetrates their perception and metaphysics of reality. If you see things other than the way the community sees them, they will demean your understanding and sympathise with your "alienness". What we intend to do is to abstract the general orientation of the Africans in their metaphysics and general view about certain aspects of reality. Here in this work, we adumbrate the African's perception of the following aspects of reality, viz, Personality, Being, Substance, Causality, Immortality of the Soul, Witchcraft, Appearance and Reality.

To preface this examination, we aver that though we cannot really see African system as being rooted in the analytic tradition of western philosophy, this is not to say that African metaphysics is less rigorous.

African metaphysics in the primeval times due to their unwritten nature cannot provide us with a written rigorous specimen of the metaphysical argumentation and analysis, nonetheless, the spirit of rigor is not absent because every view is properly examined and seen to rationally explain a cosmic puzzle before it is accepted. The Africans had a pragmatic metaphysics. If an idea, explanation, a conception, a belief or folk wisdom worked, it was accepted not minding whether they fulfilled certain fundamental criteria of objective reality. This notwithstanding, the Africans had far-reaching thoughts about their environment, physical and transcendental phenomena with which they are acquainted. If an idea worked, they still dug deep to unravel through mystical means to ascertain the basis for such phenomenon in their reality scheme. This means that the Africans are aware of the consequence of superficial contemplation of their universe. They thought and pried as deeply as their theoretical and experiential apparatus could aid them. Not having a form of writing must have hindered serious reflective after thought which ruminating over written experiences can afford. Merely mental acquaintance with reality cannot guarantee tenacity and longevity of ideas. The ideas evaporate and new attempts are made from time to time recapture the substance of previous experience. But as Omoregbe has opined, the Africans store their ideas in form of folklores, folk wisdom, mythologies, traditional religious world view, etc.,⁸ this enables them to examine more closely their views. However, this form of preservation cannot be compared with documentation in written form. Their experiences are tested in order to ascertain their truth. These tests provide the Africans with clues as they continue their forays into the wilderness of reality. It is therefore against this background of empiricism and rationalism that African metaphysics should be periscoped. Nothing is accepted without evidence and reason.

We can therefore say that in African metaphysics, empiricism merges with rationalism. The cleavage between empiricism and rationalism if it exists at all is not a matter for serious epistemological dispute. We shall examine in a nutshell our different concepts to see the way they feature in African metaphysics.

(i) PERSONALITY

Personality as a noun concept means all the qualities and attributes that makes an individual a distinct person. It includes one's make-up or constituent parts, character, conduct and personal idiosyncrasies. But personality in the context in which we are viewing it is seen from the angle of what makes-up human personality in general and the significance of each constituent part. The Western conception of a person being a rational, moral, free, linguistic and social entity⁹ is taken for granted in the African metaphysics. Though we shall examine aspects of these attributes of personality.

In the Western conception of personality, a person is said to be made up of spirit, soul and body. Religiously, the spirit is said to be a higher principle in close link with the divine order, while the soul is the go between sandwiched between the spirit and the body performing relational, regulative and communicative functions for both the spirit and the body. Plato dwelt extensively on this subject, talking of the rational, spirited and appetitive parts of the soul which appropriately should be seen as the part of the individual rather than the soul. The rational represents the spirit, the spirited, the soul and the appetitive, the body.

But in the African conception of personality, the initial problem is that of reaching a consensual view as to the constituent parts or dimensions of the human person. The Ibos, the Yorubas and the Akans of Ghana have their views of human personality. There exist some difference. Our attempt here is to harmonize some of these views. In the Ibo metaphysics according to Onwuanibe we have three component parts of the human person namely Ahu (body) Mkpuruobi (soul) and Mmuo (spirit).¹⁰ For the Ibos, man is simultaneously a physical, and spirited entity. However, it is his spirited dimension that is eternal. In the Akan conception of personality we witness three variants of this conception-dualist, trichomist and "Pentachotomist" position. For instance, Wiredu holds a pentachotomist view instantiated by five parts of the human personality. We have the Nipadua (body), the Okra (soul), Sunsum (spirit), Ntoro (character from father), Mogya (character from mother).¹¹

Kwame Gyekye on his part has noted that Akan conception of a person is thoroughly dualistic, not tripartite.¹² With this, we have seen

the Ibo tripartite or trichotomistic view, the pentachotomistic view of Wiredu and the dualistic view of Kwame Gyekye. For Gyekye it is soul and body, that is Okra and Nipadua (Honam) respectively. The truth here is that the seeming disagreement as seen above is more apparent than real. All the views are correct, that is, Wiredu's pentachotomistic view, Ibo trichotomic view and Gyekye's dualistic view. The problem lies in the need for further clarifications and elucidations.

To understand the concept of a person, we have what we call "three-fold categorial objectification". The first level is the residual categorial objectification which has to do with the double aspect conception. Secondly, we have the middle-ranged categorial objectification and finally, the bloated categorial objectification. The point is that all these views are correct African perspectives on theory of human personality. The residual categorial merely simplifies and reduces the conception to their two main broad categorisation, that is, body (material) and spirit (immaterial). The tripartite conception stresses the need to demarcate the spiritual elements into their functional cleavages. The spirit is functionally different from the soul though both are immaterial. The spiritual gets information directly from the creator and transmits the same to the soul which in turn affects the body. On the reverse side, the body first affects the soul and then the spirit. All these happen in a matter of seconds. But in man's fallen state, the soul and the spirit are subject simultaneously to the caprice and control of the body. The spirit of a rejuvenated man rejects the directive from the body via the soul. The third and last categorization is the bloated categorial objectification. This view clearly objectifies the African man's basis for interpreting a man's personality. It sees man as earthly, that is, body and as biological, that is, having input from parents. Man is a product of his maternal and paternal lineal roots. This explains why in most African communities, a man has a right to seek for a place of abode both in his paternal and maternal families. He is not regarded a stranger in any of these places.

The Africans do not subscribe to Hume and Russell's views that there is no continuing self identity. Or as William James has said that man is a stream of consciousness. For the African, man has a continuing self-identity. This, Ibos call 'Mmuo' that is, spirit. The 'chi' which is the

destiny can change depending on a number of factors like hardwork, spiritual fortification, divine intervention can change a person's chi but his spirit (mmuo) cannot be changed - it continues as an identical being throughout existence. This means that in the Ibo metaphysics of personality a man's essence is his 'mmuo' (spirit) which continues to exist even after physical death. Existence of human personality is dual, earthly existence and spiritual (eternal) existence. The body exists temporarily on earth while the spirit continues to exist after death.

We have fairly elaborated on the African conception of a person because it is the central nut that holds together other metaphysical world views. We have therefore shown in an eclectic way that African conception of personality is multi-dimensional and yet can be streamlined into a simplified dualistic view of human personality. In this essay, we are doing what Socrates was doing, that of mid-wifing what is latent in the African metaphysical reality scheme. From what has been said about the African conception of personality, we see that it embraces and transcends the western conception.

(ii) **Being**

The next concept is Being. Being is a generic term which represents all existing things. Africans conceive of every things as being. There is nothing that exists which is taken lightly. The belief is that there is reason for whatever is. Though man may not immediately know why a thing is created, but they all serve a purpose. Being is therefore conceived as the whole range of, existent things. The Africans have a hierarchy of beings with God at the apex followed by the ancestors then lesser gods or divinities, then we have totems or emblems of hereditary relationship followed by other spirits that are manipulated in sorcery, withcraft or magic for certain ends. These are represented at times in charms and amulets, then, we have man and finally, animal and plant as occupying the lowest level.¹³

There is the argument in some quarters that this hierarchy is not rigid. Because events can cause a hitherto insignificant god or divinity to become so powerful that it assumes a central place of reverence in the life of the community more than the ancestors. The ancestors are revered because it is held that they are always better disposed to the good.

of the living. But other gods or divinities are highly capricious and unpredictable. Plants and animals can be habited by powerful forces which make them become very prominent in the spiritual rating of the society. This conception of being from the point of view of force is pervasive in African conception of being. This may have prompted Tempels to concentrate his attention on this aspects to the neglect of other elements involved in explaining the concept of being. Henri Maurier in a similar vein has suggested the vitalist framework as most appropriate in understanding the African conception of being. Vitalist here is seen in the sense of understanding being in terms of force and interrelationship among these forces or being¹⁴.

The above picture will give the impression of a disordered universe of perennial strife among the forces. Though there is, but this strife is controlled and regulated by the unseen hand of the creator. The Africans believe that whatever happens cannot go unnoticed by the omnipresent eyes of the creator. God being at the apex of the hierarchy of beings, oversees and regulates what goes on in the universe. God's supreme position is made clear in the African names of God. The Ibos for instance call God *Okaka-Amasi-Amasi* and *Chukwuokike* meaning one who is not fully known, and the creator of the universe. The Yorubas call Him *Olodumare* meaning the Almighty one, while the Akan people of Ghana call Him *Onyame* which means the Supreme being.¹⁵ In other words, God alone is full actuality and infinite. Other beings are finite and limited. For the Africans beings form an intricate nexus of reality. Reality is seen both particularistically and universalistically. But of ultimate importance to the Africans is how things are holistically or the interconnections that exist among particular beings.

(iii) SUBSTANCE

The notion of substance in the African conception is closely related to the concepts of being and personality. Unlike western conception where substance is seen as a substratum that sustains fleeting appearances or seen as the sum of all qualities or seen as mere idea in the mind as in the case of Berkeley, the Africans see substance as the quality of beingness which could be seen, felt or divined through oracular means. What constitutes substance is the evidence that a thing exist

whether seen or unseen by the physical eyes. The African does not go into the Berkeleyan and Lockean controversy of the unknown. Somewhat, the idea in the mind and the totality of qualities. The Africans for instance do not see spirits but they believe they exist, knowing their qualities is immaterial. What is important is that there is ample evidence that the activities of these spirits affect them favourably or adversely. However, there is the belief that every being has its distinctive qualities whether perceived or not.

(iv) CAUSALITY

For the Africans, the concept of causality is a very central issue. The African life is permeated by the understanding that nothing happens without a cause. The question that is asked is why must a particular event happen to a particular person, at a particular place and at a given time? This means that the concept of chance does not have a place in the African metaphysics. What we call chance is our ignorance of the series of actions and reaction that have given rise to a given event. The corollary of this view is to hold that the African man's world is deterministically ordered through and through. This is not true. The African cause and effect nexus still permits the exercise of free-will. When a man is faced with alternative actions, he is free to choose to carry out one or the other. However, in certain cases, the individual may find himself compelled by circumstances beyond his control to choose one of the alternative actions.

Again, we can say that chance, determinism and freewill when properly understood can be seen as different sides of the same coin. What we call chance is what happens accidentally, yet traceable to a cause and a reason. What we call a determined event is the aftermath of a freely committed act which has consequently led to a determined cause and effect. It is like free will opens the door of actions and then determinism takes its turn. Man is free therefore to some extent and yet limited by his community. The African reality scheme is said to be both individualistic and communitarian.¹⁶ He is free to go against the wishes of the community but with the accompanying sanctions. Through personal initiative, the individual can exercise his freedom without coming into conflict with the collective will of the community.

The African is not troubled about the Humean gnoseological intricacies of necessary conditions for causality namely, priority in time, constant conjunction, contiguity in time and space and necessary connection. Neither do the Africans bother themselves about the Cartesian problem of interactionism. It is rather taken for granted that the body and the spirit though having different natures interact. As Sogolo has aptly put it "one of the puzzles that face those seeking to understand traditional African belief system is how, in the explanation of observable events, disembodied or non-extended entities (spirits, witches, ghosts, gods, etc. existing beyond the confines of space) could possibly be invoked as causes. This problem arises mainly due to the widespread mechanistic view of causality where necessary connection is assumed to exist between the cause and effect, along Humean argument."¹⁷

Continuing in the above argument, Sogolo maintains that the conception of causality today is so loose and varied in meaning that what counts as a causal explanation of an event would depend on factors such as the nature of the event to be explained, our interest in the event, whether the event has to be explained, our interest in the event, whether the event has one cause or a multiplicity of necessary causes, whether, when the causes are more than one, they can be compatibly invoked and finally whether some of the causes are sufficient such that the others are unnecessary and superfluous.¹⁸ With the foregoing, it becomes clear that there are different conceptions that could constitute causal explanation. We may not need to examine the material, formal, efficient and final causes (as Aristotle posited) in every case of causal explanation. The Africans look at cause and effect from the point of view of an imaginable range of possibilities or they resort to oracles for the final verdict.

(v) IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

The question of immortality of the soul is not a controversial issue in African reality scheme. It is taken as a truism. The soul of man is immortal. It continues to exist after the dissolution of the body. Its abode is determined by how well it lived here. If a soul lived well, it will live in a special place of peace, but if it lived badly it may be barred from having a resting place, it may continue to roam the earth. However, all spirits are said to have direct contact with the physical earth. This is

why ancestral spirits are sacrificed to in the understanding that they come to eat of the sacrifices. This shows that the Christian concept of eternal separation between the living and the dead is not agreeable to the African world view. The concept of heaven and hell is not well delineated in the African conception.

The concept of immortality is closely linked with re-incarnation. For the Africans, spirits are reincarnated. Both good and bad spirits. The good spirits are welcomed while the bad spirits called *Abiku*, *Ogbanje*, *ndem* are either exorcised or rejected. The Africans through divination or other esoteric means claim to be capable of detecting which spirit has returned. The question at this point is does a human person have two spirits - one given by the creator and the other represented by the incarnating spirit? The truth is that the unregenerated man can be inhabited by more than one spirit because the spirit of God in him is inactive but at regeneration the spirit of God is quickened and the evil spirits lose their hold on the persons personality. A bad spirit may manifest as the spirit of witchcraft, sorcery or necromancy.

(vi) **WITCHCRAFT**

This leads us to the consideration of the notion of witchcraft in African metaphysics. Witchcraft is the spiritual skill of being able carry on certain inimical activities in disembodied form. This could include sucking of blood, eating, holding a meeting, causing accident or inflicting pains or diseases. In Africa there abound many proven cases of the activity of witches and wizards. This shows us that African experience surpasses the narrow causal explanatory framework philosophy. The scientific model is therefore not the absolute. There is the method of extra sensory perception (ESP) which can be used by those so endowed to understand the more complicated causal framework in which African experience fits. Witchcraft is a real phenomenon. The study of spiritism, occultism, mysticism, and cybernetics reveal that man is a carrier of great current of waves which can be projected to bring about certain desired ends however, with some limitations.

CONCLUSION

Finally, we say that African metaphysics is a hotch-potch of beliefs

and realities which are the outcome of their lived experiences. Appearance is not wholly reality to the African. The Physically perceptual level holds a different kind of reality while the spiritually perceptible holds quite another level. Both are regarded as real in a sense but in cases of conflict, the African will hold to such truths or realities that have been corroborated and confirmed by spiritual means. At some level, the Africans may adopt a seeing is believing attitude while at other times they insist on consummate verification before they can believe. It appears that all things are first taken to be real until proved otherwise. We have cursorily examined the different dimensions and aspects of African metaphysics but we want to add that these views are not static. In fact, today, a hybrid metaphysics is fast becoming the order with African metaphysics merging with Christianity, Islam, Eastern Religions and Western conceptions of reality. This work is far from saying all that needs to be said, it only intends to ignite more discussions on the idea of African metaphysics and metaphysics in general.

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AN EXAMINATION OF ROSTOW'S STAGES OF ECONOMIC GROWTH

BY

S. Olayinka Opafola
B.A. (Hons.) Phil. (Ago-Iwoye)
M.A. Phil. (Lagos)
Department of Philosophy
Faculty of Arts
Ogun State University
P.M.B. 2002
Ago-Iwoye

INTRODUCTION

W.W. Rostow is one of the exponents of modernization theory of development. Modernization theorists regard

the process of development as the business of the acquisition by the underdeveloped countries of the traits and characteristics of the developed countries.¹

Rostow propounded this theory in Chapter xiii - "The Stages of Economic Growth" - of his book, "The Process of economic Growth" (second edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960). This chapter contains a summary of the concept of the stages of growth which "is developed and applied at length in (another book) 'The Stages of Economic Growth' (Cambridge University Press, 1960)"². This paper analyses and evaluates the stages of economic growth recognized by Rostow. The paper is divided into four sections. Introduction constitutes the first section. Rostow's five stages of economic growth are analysed in the second section while evaluation is undertaken in the third section. Summary and conclusion features in the fourth section.

2. AN ANALYSIS OF ROSTOW'S STAGES OF ECONOMIC GROWTH

In his theory, Rostow maintained that economic growth spans through five stages. They are "the traditional society; the precondition for take-off; the take-off the drive to maturity; the age of high mass

consumption".³

As Rostow put it:

*... traditional societies, evolved within limited production functions ... limitations of technology decreed a ceiling beyond which they could not penetrate. They did not lack inventiveness and innovations, some of high productivity. (But) they lacked ... the tools and the outlook towards the physical world of the post-Newtonian era.*⁴

In the opinion of Rostow, traditional societies had economies that were mainly agricultural. They used more or less unchanging production methods, saved and invested productively little more than was required to meet depreciation.⁵

Rostow affirmed that preconditions for sustained industrial growth demand radical change in social overhead capital, agriculture, and trade-three non-industrial sectors. This change entails

*first, a build-up of social overhead capital, notably in transport ... second, a technological revolution in agriculture (i.e. increased productivity in agriculture ... Third, an expansion in imports financed by the more efficient production and marketing of some natural resources plus, where possible, capital imports.*⁶

Whether the change in the non-industrial sectors will materialise or not depends on whether or not the following conditions exist:

a willingness of the agricultural community to accept new techniques and to respond to the possibilities of the widened commercial market; the existence and freedom to operate a new group of industrial entrepreneurs and above all, a national government capable not only of providing a setting of a peaceful order which encouraged the new modernizing activities but also capable and willing to take a degree of direct responsibility for the build-up of social over-

head capital (including its finance), for an appropriate trade policy., and often, as well, for the diffusion of agricultural and industrial techniques."

The take-off stage is marked by attainment of rapid growth in sectors that have witnessed the application of self-sustained modern industrial techniques. The leading sectors in take-off include cotton textiles, railroads, agricultural processing, oil, import-substitution industries and ship building.⁸ A society that has reached the take-off stage can also be recognised by its ability "to sustain an annual rate of net investment of the order of least, 10 percent."⁹ More-over, Rostow described the take-off in non-economic terms too. In this regard,

the take-off usually witnesses a definitive social, political and cultural victory of those who would either cling to the traditional society or seek other goals; but because nationalism can be a social solvent as well as a diversionary force the victory can assume forms of mutual accommodation rather than destruction of the traditional groups by the more modern.¹⁰

Rostow defined the drive to maturity as "the period when a society has effectively applied the range of (then) modern technology to the bulk of its resources"¹¹ During this period, the industrial process is differentiated, with new leading sectors gathering momentum to supplant the older leading sectors of the take-off..¹²

The age of high mass consumption is one in which a society having attained both technological maturity and a certain level of real income per head decides to provide enlarged private consumption-including single family homes and durable consumer goods and services on a mass basis.¹³

Rostow stated that:

Beyond the age of high mass consumption lie the problems which are beginning to arise in a few societies, and which may arise generally when diminishing relative marginal utility sets in for real income itself.¹⁴

Suffice it to say that:

The crucial point in Rostow's analysis is that, although for the non-industrialized world the initial stimulus to modernization arrives from outside through the example set by the industrialized countries, the basic problem of taking off is totally external to the economies concerned. Essentially, it is to produce enough individuals with entrepreneurial abilities..¹⁵

Two sets of dualism follow from modernization theory; namely, economic dualism and sociological dualism. Preston stated that:

The essence of the theory of economic dualism is the attempt to combine in one system theory for an advanced and for a backward economy where the two 'sectors' are characterized in the usual way..¹⁶

He claimed that sociological dualisms concern the dichotomies between 'traditional/modern' societies. Scholars such as A. Lewis, J.H. Bocke who gave dualist explanations of underdevelopment claimed that dual societies consist of two fundamentally different sectors. The first is dynamic modern sector, organised on capitalist lines and located around major cities and ports. The second is a large, mainly stagnant, subsistence sector located in the rural hinterland and containing the mass of population. Economic and social interaction between the two sectors is minimal if it exists at all. The problem of underdevelopment is understood by dualists as primarily that of creating linkages between the two sectors so that modernity can be diffused from one to the other.¹⁷

Randall and Theobald suggested further that two line of sociological thinking inform modernization theory - two approaches to modernization. One is social differentiation while the other is psycho-cultural. Proponents of the first line (evolutionary tradition) of thinking - Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons etc. - regarded development or "social evolution" as

a process of social differentiation as a result of which societies become structurally more complex... Social differentiation ... is the evolution from a multi-func-

*tional role structure to several more specialised role structures.*¹⁸

Parsons identified four basic functional problems or imperatives which must engage the attention of all social systems

These are:

- (1) adaptation which refers to the capacity of a system to control its environment for the purpose of achieving certain goals;
- (2) goal attainment, referring to the need to relate the system's resources to the achievement of its goals;
- (3) integration, which deals with the problem of maintaining cohesion between the units of the systems; and
- (4) pattern maintenance or latency, which refers to the imperative of maintaining a stable value system and dealing with problems of motivation.¹⁹

He argued further that social roles in all societies are patterned in such a way as to present five basic dichotomies along which individual action may proceed. These dichotomies - each of which is similar to the tradition/modern dichotomy - are affectivity/affective neutrality, self-orientation/group orientation, particularism/universalism, ascription/achievement, functional diffuseness/functional specificity.²⁰

The other line of sociological thinking influencing modernization theory is psycho-cultural. Members of this school of thought such as Daniel Lerner, David McClelland, Everett Hagen and Alex Inkeles took development "to be a function of appropriate values, attitudes and personality traits"²¹ They stressed "the importance of values and attitudes in the achievement of industrialization and development in the Third World".²² These thinkers distinguished between modern man and traditional man.

Modern man is adaptable, independent, efficient, oriented to long-term planning, sees the world as amenable to change and above all, is confident of the ability to bring change about ... He is an informed participant citizen... he is relatively, open-minded and cognitively stable...

*Traditional man, by contrast, is anxious, suspicious, lacking in ambition, oriented towards immediate needs, fatalistic, conservative and clings to well-established procedures even when they are no longer appropriate.*²³

It is relevant to state that psycho-cultural line of sociological thinking has affinity to modernization theory because both emphasise "psycho-cultural pre-requisites of development" such as personality traits, attitudes and values.

Randall and Theobald observed that "political modernization" and "political development" are synonymous. These two notions are often employed in "one of three ways";

*First, there is the original meaning, movement in the direction of Western-style democracy; second, a radical variant which emphasises 'liberation', self-reliance and an end to dependency, and in some cases, revolution. And third, there is the view which sees political development or modernisation as synonymous with political stability and economic growth.*²⁴

Corresponding to the original meaning is the modernization theorists' conception of political development. Modernization theorists measure political development in terms of movement in the direction of social or 'bourgeois' democracies of western Europe and North America. These democracies are marked by free elections and open competition between pressure groups attempting to influence the state.

3. AN EVALUATION OF ROSTOW'S STAGES OF ECONOMIC GROWTH

Rostow postulated his five stages of economic growth apparently to counter what he regarded as Marx's stages of modern development: feudalism, capitalism, socialism and communism.²⁵ However, he was only trying to fight a strawman. This is so because far from being a 'stage theory' as understood by Rostow, Marx's theory is:

one that says that social systems do not occur haphazardly but are related to developments in the

*productive forces and have a certain organizational unity and character arising from the form of division of labour.*²⁶

Whereas the supposed Marx's stages of modern development have specific features, Rostow's "stages do not have distinctive attributes and it is difficult, if not impossible, to tell where one stage ends and the other begins".²⁷

It should also be noted that terms employed by Rostow

*are a mere impressionistic interpretation of a number of historical experience rather than a rigorous scientific analysis and is itself based on the history of capitalist countries*²⁸

Moreover, it is important to observe that:

*it is impossible... to find anywhere in the world today a society which exhibits the characteristics of Rostow's traditional stage. This is because such 'traditional' society have long since disintegrated with their incorporation into the world capitalist economy ...*²⁹

We agree with G. Frank that it is fallacious for Rostow to recognise the history of economically advanced countries and deny that of economically backward ones. This presupposes that:

*The present 'rich' have the history of their emergence, whilst the 'poor' are yet to move, so to say, and consequently, have no history.*³⁰

Rostow deliberately neglected slave trade, colonialism and their consequences. It did not occur to him that in Africa, for instance, human and natural endowments were pillaged by the supposed developed countries during slave trade and colonialism. He also ignored the fact that, among other things, slave trade, colonialism - and recently, neo-colonialism - served as vehicles of underdevelopment of Third World countries and development of advanced capitalist countries whose cause he was trying to champion. In other words, underdevelopment of the former

and development of the latter have their roots in the historical connection between them.

It is, therefore, fallacious for anyone to assume that the question of underdevelopment and its solution are internal to the countries concerned. Any approach to issues of development and cultural changes, like Rostow's, which proceeds from such assumption is not only misleading but also ahistorical. Rostow also neglected the fact that the inability of underdeveloped countries to produce sufficient individuals with entrepreneurial abilities originates from these historical and dependent relationships.

Modernization theorists' perception of the dynamism of societies and individuals is narrow. They suggest that development of any economy entails the development of its agricultural sector into the industrial sector. We are being told that development of each society is measured by the incorporation of its rural or traditional sector into the urban or modern sector. On the one hand, it is assumed that the rural areas with its subsistent agriculture and economy constitutes the traditional sector. On the other, urban/modern sector features social and infrastructural facilities such as banks, manufacturing and commercial concerns or outfits, network of tarred roads, regular electricity supply, pipe-borne water, etc. This implies that the development of any economically backward country depends on the modernization of the traditional sector.

Modernization theorists also divide the world into two; namely traditional and modern. Underdeveloped countries are supposed to be traditional while economically advanced countries are regarded as modern. This also entails that if the former wish to develop, they need to look up to the latter, to acquire their artefacts or characteristics. Furthermore, man is divided into "traditional" man and "modern" man as hitherto stated. Modernization theorists want us to believe that development of the so-called traditional man requires the acquisition of the qualities of the modern man.

Modernization theory ignores the fact that all societies display "traditional" and "modern" characteristics. It is also liable to this criticism:

Viewed as a theory of history or change, however, the addition of a transitional category tended to exclude the traditional and modern stages from the historical process. (Modernization theorists seem to regard) the two notions 'traditional' and 'modern' (as) the start and end of history. But if all real societies are transitional societies a theory is needed which will explain the forms and processes of change at work in transitional societies. This is just what the dichotomy (that is modernization) theory failed to provide.³¹

Modernization theorists have also been rebuked for classifying Third World countries as traditional societies. The classification, it is claimed, begs the issue. The question is, why are Third World nations underdeveloped? Modernization theorists claim that Third World countries are underdeveloped because they are traditional societies. To say this is to evade the question. An adequate answer to this question demands a thorough examination of their history - most especially, their past, as well as present, relationships with advanced capitalist countries.

... The formulation 'traditional/modern' is thus skewed in that it rules out consideration of the part played by the 'rich' in creating the present circumstances of the 'poor'.³²

The so-called modernity of advanced capitalist countries, among other economically advanced nations, was partly achieved through the plunder of human and natural resources of the underdeveloped countries. We have argued that it is fallacious for modernization theorists to classify Third World countries as traditional societies. We share Frank's view that 'traditional' societies are non-existent today.

The call for modernization of the rural or traditional sector is suspect. In each underdeveloped country, for instance, this sector facilitates the development of the modern sector, and indeed, the entire nation. The modern sector procures some of its raw materials among other things, from the rural/traditional sector. The latter also produces

the bulk of the country's food requirements. Modernisation of the rural/traditional sector is not absolutely necessary. The modern sector of most Third World Countries has been integrated into the international capitalist orbit. This promotes its exploitation by the advanced capitalist countries. Since the modern sector also maintains links with the traditional sector and since its economy is external-oriented, it serves as the conduit pipe for the exploitation of the latter by the advanced capitalist countries. The call for the modernization of the rural/traditional sector of an underdeveloped country is therefore intended to facilitate its exploitation on a large scale by the advanced capitalist countries. Proponents of dualist explanations of underdevelopment suppose that "a large subsistence sector (is) cut off from the world economy."³³ However, this assumption is wrong because "a chain of dependence (extends) from the very centre of the world (Capitalist) economic system down to its furthest periphery".³⁴

We do not believe that each economically advanced country does not have a rural or traditional sector. However, we believe that both traditional and modern sectors of any country reinforce one another. It is not absolutely imperative for Third World countries to acquire the characteristics of the economically advanced countries in order to develop. It should not be assumed that only one road leads to development. Development of underdeveloped countries can and ought to be internally directed and inward-looking.

As implicitly suggested by Parsons, each country or social system - economically advanced or backward-should be able to solve the problems of adaptation, goal attainment, integration and pattern maintenance or latency. He seemed to ignore limitations to the ability of some countries to solve these problems. We have considered some of these impediments. We have discussed the influence of most economically backward countries to manipulate nature (environment). Integration of underdeveloped countries into the world capitalist system makes it difficult for them to achieve their goals. Class struggles occasioned by unbridled exploitation render maintenance of cohesion elusive. Motivation and stable value system are difficult to attain in capitalist and exploitative societies. We have stated that Parsons classified social roles

in all societies into five basic cleavages which may inform individual action. We also observed that each of these divisions is identical with the tradition-modern dichotomy. In the spirit of the distinction between traditional man and modern man, it means that the first part of each dichotomy qualifies the traditional man while the second part identifies the modern man.

The lines that are supposed to exist between the so-called traditional and modern man are tenuous. The dichotomy between traditional man and modern man is misleading. It portrays a misunderstanding of human nature. It also presupposes a fixation of value and, or, attitudes on the part of individuals. It is difficult to find a person - a moral agent - who does not display an admixture of the two sets of characteristics. What makes the difference between individuals is the degree to which a combination of particular features manifest. It should be noted that this degree is even a function of nature and nurture (up-bringing).

Other fallacies inherent in modernization theory include the following:

- (1) ... Traditional societies have been static ...,
- (2) traditional culture is a consistent body of norms and values ...
- (3) a traditional society must have a homogenous social structure ...,
- (4) old traditions are dissolved by innovation ...,
- (5) tradition and modernity are forever in conflict and
- (6) that they are mutually exclusive ... and
- (7) the modernising process weakens tradition³⁵

Generally speaking, these assumptions do not usually hold.

Modernization theory can also be considered as the ideological child of the cold war between the United States of America (U.S.A.) and former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.). In an attempt to get allies within the Third World, U.S.A. presented or put forward 'modernization' and membership of the 'freeworld' with its capitalist free market as against 'socialism' offered by the erstwhile U.S.S.R.³⁶ Modernization theorists prefer evolutionary change to revolutionary change. Their efforts consist in discouraging the latter and recommending the former.

It is relevant to emphasise that modernization and growth theories are, metaphorically, two sides of the same coin. This is evident from the fact that both groups of theories affirm the slogan addressed to the developed countries - one in which most of them seem to have acquiesced: "If you want to develop, catch up with the 'West'". Therefore, growth and modernization theorists regard the West as the model of development. This 'positivist' position is a reformulation of " ... late nineteenth-century jingoistic themes of the complete superiority of Western man in contrast to the childish natives."³⁷ The civilizing mission ideology of erstwhile colonialists presupposes this imagined superiority.

However, the discovery by black soldiers during the first and second world wars about the physical weakness of their white counterparts diasbused their minds about the latter's biological superiority. Similarly, educational interactions between blacks and whites also rendered the latter's alleged intellectual superiority untenable. These discoveries, among others, influenced nationalism and consequently, demands for an end to colonialism in Third world Countries.

Modernization theory not only assumes that political development is desirable but also that only Western-style democracy is desirable. But desirability of anything does not make it good. If Western-style democracy is desirable, this does not mean that it is good or even the best. Its usefulness as instrument of exploitation and wastage puts a question mark on its goodness. There may be standards of measuring political development other than modernization of traditional political institutions. It is sheer ethno-centrism for modernization theorists to regard existing political systems of the Western world - especially, liberal democracy - as the model of political development.

Randall and Theobald considered some obstacles militating against the establishment of Western-style democracy in Third World countries. In these countries, the people have been allowed to participate in politics despite the underdeveloped nature of their economies in contrast to what obtained in the developed countries. The politicians raise the hope of the masses about the good things of life only to renege on their promises after elections. Other factors include the following:

*The meagre size of the national cake in underdeveloped states induces not the sedate competition of Western democracies but a frenetic scramble which can often be extremely vicious. Scarcity and instability promote an atmosphere of insecurity... Because of the absence of a strong independent trade-union movement, genuine mass parties along European democratic lines have failed to emerge in most countries of the Third World...*³⁸

Dominant groups often use their power to amass and squander natural resources instead of promoting economic and social reforms. These obstacles militating against the establishment of Western-style democracy in the underdeveloped world reveal that its prospects are anything but bright.

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

W.W Rostow, like other modernization theories, gave dualist explanation of underdevelopment. Solution to underdevelopment is supposed to consist in bridging the gap between the modern and traditional sectors of the world, between modern and traditional sectors of the country's economy etc. to enable the traditional sector attain modernity.

Dividing lines that are supposed by Rostow and other modernization theorists to exist between rural and modern sectors of Third World economies, traditional and modern political systems, traditional man and modern man are tenuous. For instance, the connection between the traditional (agricultural) and modern (industrial) sectors of a national economy is often neglected.

Rostow ignored the exploitation of economically backward countries by advanced capitalist countries. It is fallacious and misleading for him to regard problem of underdevelopment and its solution as internal to the affected countries.

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3. W. W. Rostow, *op. cit.*, p. 307.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 311.
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6. *Ibid.*, p. 313.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 314.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 317.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 317.
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14. *Ibid.*, pp. 307.
15. See V. Randall and R. Theobald, *Political Change and Underdevelopment: A Critical Introduction to Third World Politics* (London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1985), p.21.
16. See P.W. Perston, *op. cit.*, p. 88.
17. See V. Randall and R. Theobald, *op. cit.*, pp 107 - 108.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
20. For a detailed discussion of these distinctions, See V. Randall and R. Theobald, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
21. See V. Randall and R. Theobald, *op. cit.*, P. 19.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 18 and 34.
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25. See Eskor Toyo, "'Non-Ethnocentric Flaws in Competing Non-Marxist Paradigms of Development" in Y. Barongo (ed.) *Political Science in Africa: A Critical Review* (London: Zed Press, 1983), p. 165.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 165.
27. See L. Stein, *Economic Realities in Poor Countries* (London:

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28. See Eskor Toyo, *op. cit.*, p. 166.
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 30. See P. W. Preston, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
 31. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
 32. See V. Randall and R. Theobald, *op. cit.*, p. 108.
 33. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
 34. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
 35. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
 36. See P. W. Preston, *op. cit.*, pp. 72 and 74.
 37. *Ibid.*, pp. 24 and 25.
- For further critique of modernization theory, see the following works among others: (a) H. Brookfield, *Interdependent Development* (London: Methuen, 1975).
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PLATO'S INFLUENCE ON EPISTEMOLOGY IN WESTERN PHILOSOPHY THROUGH THE AGES

BY

Mrs E. O. Kehinde (Ph.D)

Dept. of Philosophy

University of Lagos

Akoka.

This paper treats the rationalist and Empiricist epistemology as stemming out of Plato. Plato's epistemological views as expressed in his dialogues have become the dividing line in the history of western philosophy. Before Plato in the history of Western philosophy the pre-socratics took the possibility of knowledge for granted. The only two philosophers whose philosophy have epistemological expressions before Plato are Herachtus and Parmenides.

When the Sophists arrive at the scene they question our knowledge of nature and challenge its objectivity. For example, Protagoras in his famous dictum claims that appearance is the only reality and that man is the measure. Gorgians, in a radical way refutes way reality and claims that if there is such a thing it will not be known and if it is known it can not be communicated. It is this general skepticism of the sophists that lead to the birth of epistemology.

Plato's epistemological thesis is that knowledge is not only possible, but that it is absolute, infallible and attainable. Perception, cannot be equated with knowledge. Knowledge according to him, is not true belief nor is it true belief with an account. Knowledge he expatiates is innate and resides in the soul. The soul has been acquainted with object of true knowledge in the world of ideas.

Subsequent epistemological developments since Plato have been but a reaction to Plato's thesis. I shall proceed to demonstrate this claim in this paper. I shall argue that the fact that all other epistemological schools of thought owe something to either Plato's thesis or Platonists thesis is a demonstration that Plato's epistemological thesis is a formi-

dable force to be reckoned with.

Plato's analysis of his epistemological thesis raises issues such as: Are Knowledge and belief incomparable? Plato raises this question in the *Meno* and he attempts to show that belief is a stepping stone to knowledge. In the same dialogue, Plato tries to establish that belief is one of the stages in the process of recollection. Knowledge as put forward in the *Meno* is the soul's recollection of innate ideas. This idea is further developed in *Plato's Phaedo The Republic and Theaetetus* to mention.

In the *Theaetetus*, Plato argues explicitly that knowledge and belief are incomparable if the object of such belief is a product of sense-perception. But if it is that of recollection like that of the slave boys experience in the *Meno*, then it is a step towards knowledge and it is therefore not comparable. Plato in all his dialogues emphasises that knowledge is different from belief and cannot be equated with belief.

Another basic question in Plato's dialogue is:- what is the difference between Knowledge and belief? In the *Meno* Plato places belief between knowledge and blank ignorance. At the on-set the slave boy has no knowledge but he has beliefs. Both the false produced at first and the true belief which he does not know. If he was questioned like he was in various fields he would replace his true belief with knowledge. This knowledge would be recovered bout of his soul. Plato, therefore suggests that correct belief is equally useful as knowledge but it is not indubitable, certain, and distinct like knowledge.

Somebody with correct belief may sometimes be right. He also points out that true belief are temporary because they are not secured by reasons. Knowledge is secured by reason and is permanent. In Book V of the *Republic* Plato also treats knowledge as different from belief. He conceives of knowledge as corresponding to being, while ignorance corresponds to non-being and belief is mid-way between the two. Being is the subject matter of knowledge and knowledge investigates the nature of being. The subject matter of belief is neither non-being nor being. The man with belief according to Plato always adheres to the view that reality is manifold and cannot comprehend that the manifold is one. He perceives the many but not the absolute.

In *Timaeus*,² Plato lists a number of differences between knowledge and belief and proffers these differences as reasons for concluding that both knowledge is produced by instruction but belief by persuasion. Knowledge cannot be shaken by persuasion, belief can be won over. Belief is common to all, but knowledge is possessed only by the gods and few men. Some of these propositions were later re-emphasized in Plato's *Theaetetus*.

What is the object of Knowledge? This is another basic epistemological issue raised in Plato's dialogues. The answer to this question is first put across in *Phaedo* and later developed in the *Republic*. In the *Phaedo* the objects of knowledge are Forms. Knowledge is innate and can be recollected intuitively. The Forms are superior to the imperfect perceptible objects.

The *Theaetetus* also points out that the objects of knowledge must be changeless and must also be absolutely certain.

Plato also treats the question: "How do we arrive at Knowledge as distinct from belief"? The answer he puts forwards in the *Phaedo* is that Knowledge is acquired by the soul before its incarnate existence. Belief is clearly defined at its best in the *Republic*. Belief is the beginning of a long walk which will take one through all known and foreseeable mathematics, towards the philosophical goal. Knowledge is identified as the ability to know reality. Book VII of the *Republic* presents the allegory of the cave. This allegory is illustrative of Plato's epistemological view. It points out that the state of ignorance is as bad a position as the deplorable state of the prisoners. The prisoners are doubtlessly victims of ignorance. The expressed thoughts about the actions and reactions of the escapist shows the process of Platonic cognition. The interpretation of the allegory equates the sensory world with the prison dwelling. The light of the fire is compared to the light of the sun.

As a result of the two kinds of temporary blindness demonstrated in the allegory, education can be understood in two different Perspectives. The claim that education can put knowledge into the mind is presented as similar to that of putting sight into blind eyes which is only possible as a miraculous experience. Education must aim at curing the temporary blindness before the mind can understand.

A glance at the history of epistemological thought in Western philosophy will show that later developments in the field are either a commentary on Plato's or a reaction to it. I shall make a random selection from the history of Western philosophy to demonstrate this claim.

It cannot be over-emphasised that Plato is the father of Rationalism in the broad sense of it. His rationalistic thesis is that the soul has innate knowledge derived from the world of ideas. This idea is explicitly put forward in the *Meno* and illustrated in the allegory of the cave in the *Republic*. He also states along side that knowledge is possible, plausible, absolute, infallible and that it cannot be equated with perception or true belief. This is the thesis that has influenced epistemology in the history of western philosophy.

Aristotle is the first to be provoked and influenced by this Platonic epistemology. In his reaction to it empiricism a rival epistemological theory is conceived and born. Aristotle affirms that sense-perception is the ultimate source of knowledge. He maintains that every sense has its own proper object. He regards sense-perception as the source of memory because memory, according to him is derived from sense-perception.

He refutes Plato's identification of knowledge with recollection as mistaken. But he borrows Plato's view-point when he treats recollection as an inductive method and that it occurs only when there are series of movements in the soul. He explains recollection as the following of one impulse.

Moreover, Aristotle does not successfully convince us that his subject is better than Plato's. Aristotle's salient point is that recollection has nothing to do with the soul being in a state of reminiscence. He also rates metaphysical knowledge as wisdom. In a way he approves of sense-perception and sense data as second best. This paradox owes its origin to the fact that Aristotle could not completely purge himself of platonic influence. The "forms" (are for Aristotle what ideas are for Plato) have metaphysical existence and they condition individual things.

Though Aristotle is of the view that the mind at birth is blank and all our knowledge comes from sense-perception he does not consistently hold this view for he accepts that wisdom (Philosophical Knowledge)

should not be identified with sense-perception. In essence, he recognises the existence of Knowledge that is not derived from sense-perception. He also postulates that knowledge and proficiency belong more properly to art rather than to experience.

Plato's influence on Aristotle's philosophy of the essence of things could not be undermined. In reaction to Plato's Philosophy, Aristotle proffers the principle of act and potency to explain change and permanence in things. Another glaring influence of Plato on Aristotle is the fact that he takes over from Plato the belief in objectivity and the possibility of knowledge almost unconsciously. He then proceeds to argue in an opposite direction that sense-perception as opposed to Plato's "Soul-perception" is the principal source of knowledge. In essence, Plato's epistemology gives birth to the cleavage in modern epistemology between rationalism and empiricism.

Medieval philosophers are not unaffected by Plato's theory of Knowledge. St. Augustine's epistemology is Platonic. He defends Plato against the skepticism of Carneades. In his refutations of this scepticism, he tries to prove that there are at least some inescapable certainties in human Knowledge on which we may absolutely rely such as existence, thinking, mathematical truth and moral judgements. According to St. Augustine, anybody who claims that nothing can be known is contradicting himself because he is at least sure of one thing, that is the fact that he is doubting that anything can be known. Augustine's theory of divine illumination is also his Christian interpretation of the Platonic idea in the *Republic*.

St. Bonaventure and Aquinas though Aristotelian still accept part of Plato's epistemology. St. Bonaventure depicts the doctrine of forms as the heart of metaphysics. He also approves of the idea that we have innate knowledge of God's existence and moral principles. St. Aquinas in his conception of synderesis as habitus of the intellect, which enables us to know first principles of practical reasoning is in a way re-echoing Plato's idea on innate Knowledge of moral principles.

In spite of Bacon's attempt aimed at setting a radical departure from Mediaeval tradition, one can still detect in his epistemology Platonic influences. Francis Bacon belongs to the Aristotelian epistemological

tradition. In fact, he is regarded by most people as the real father of British Empiricism. He regards anything that is not related to experience as useless. So knowledge must be related to experience and observation. He recognises that it is our interpretation of reality that has affected the advancement of knowledge. He categorises four types of the general tendencies of human mind that need to be corrected. They are:-

- (1) The idols of tribe
- (2) The idols of the Market place
- (3) The idols of 'den' or cave
- (4) The idols of the Theatre.⁴

All these idols could be seen as Bacon's own interpretation of the chain that fettered the prisoners' in Plato's allegory of the cave from birth. Although Francis Bacon does not make explicit reference to Plato in connection with this theory of the Idols, yet the whole idea behind the theory is to identify things that obstruct certain or absolute knowledge. This is also the idea behind Plato's allegory of the cave.

Some of Bacon's idols can be further illustrated in Plato's other dialogues. In essence, I strongly contend that these idols are allusions to Plato's idea. The idols of the tribe could be conceived as another way of writing the famous dictum of Protagoras in the Theaetetus (151b-160e). This idol is so called according to Bacon, because they are inherent in human nature and tribe or race of men. The idols stem from the tendencies of taking things exactly as they appear to us, without taking the trouble to investigate further into their real nature to discover whether they are really as they appear. This can also be seen in the passage on the allegory of the cave. The first problem of the prisoners is that they misconstrue the images of images for reality.

What is the solution to this? Plato's solution is that the chains be broken in order to set the prisoners free. Having been set free the prisoners can then begin an ascent towards the real world of ideas where things can be known and perceived in their form. His solution also casts doubt on our senses and implies absolute trust in our reason. Francis Bacon's solution to this problem is only superficially different from Plato's but in reality they are basically the same. To correct these

tendencies Bacon posits that much attention should not be given to the negative as well as to the positive instances of such sequences.

The second idol is that of the cave. Here Bacon alludes to Plato's allegory of the cave in which shadows are taken for reality. Everybody is prone to interpreting his experience in the light of his individual temperament, education, environment and language. Bacon's solution to this is that a one should be sceptical about whatever one's mind comes to dwell upon with a particular slavish satisfaction. We can see then that this reputable father of empiricism is not without the influence of Plato.

Modern Rationalists like Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz are not without Plato's influence either. According to them knowledge is derived from reflection or introspection. Rationalism as conceived by Descartes, pre-empts Empiricism. It made the conclusion of modern Empiricism its starting point. In an attempt to attain true, absolute, clear and distinct ideas, we have to make our minds an absolute void, a perfect tabular rasa' to efface and erase all inscriptions that have ever been made upon it. Descartes in his letter to Father Bourdin is reported to have said:

"If you have a basket full of apples some of which (as you know) are bad and will spoil and poison the rest you have no other means than to empty your basket completely and then take and test the apples one by one, in order to put the good one back in your basket and throw away those that are not"⁵

Descartes decision on which of the apples are good or bad is to be dictated by reason. Plato has earlier on endorsed Reason as the faculty of knowledge. Furthermore, Descartes methodic doubt is generally said to have taken its root in St. Augustine, this is true to some extent, but I propose to show that the real root of Descartes is in the epistemology of Plato. Descartes builds his methodic doubt on the following:-

1. Not to accept as true anything of which we have no clear and distinct idea.
2. To analyse the problem.
3. To start from simple and certain thoughts and proceed from them to the more complex.
4. To start to review the field so thoroughly that no consideration

are omitted.⁶

Plato could be said to have anticipated these four premises of Descartes. Plato presents these four premises in his dialogues. In the early dialogues he analyses the problems of knowledge and rejects anything which could not be clearly and distinctly perceived by the soul. He calls those things outside the realm of "Soul-perception" opinion or beliefs which is not knowledge. He introduces to us the objects of knowledge which are the forms. These forms, Plato explains, have their independent existence in the world of ideas. They are the only things that have clear, distinct and immutable existence.

Plato explained the processes of arriving at this knowledge. The movement as illustrated in the *Republic* anticipated Descartes' third premise. For these reasons one can say that Descartes' Philosophy has its roots in Plato. Plato sets out his epistemological theory to establish the possibility of knowledge as against the skepticism of the sophists. Descartes, like Plato, is of the view that there is a definite conception of knowledge and therefore most of what we ordinarily call knowledge according to Descartes is clear and distinct perception. By "perception" he does not mean sense-perception but soul-perception.

The result of Descartes' inquiry is that there is one proposition which is indubitable and after doubting everything he concludes that this proposition is (cogito ergo sum) "I think therefore, I exist".⁸

In a sense, he has been anticipated in this regard by St. Augustine's "Si fallor sum" ("If I am mistaken I exist"). Plato had earlier anticipated this method of argument in his proof of the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedo* (100a-170e).

After rejecting sense-perception as deceptive Plato finds a metaphysical explanation in the pre-existence of the soul. Descartes finds his in the existence of God. Descartes is generally considered as the father of continental Rationalism, but his epistemology is only a footnote on that of Plato. The Empiricist reaction to Descartes' Rationalism is a reaction to Plato's epistemology.

The Empiricist beginning from Aristotle through Francis Bacon, Locke, Berkeley and Hume are trying to rebuff Plato's Rationalism. Locke who is sometimes referred to as the father of British Empiricism

is not a complete Empiricist, for he accepts the existence of a material substance which, we do not perceive. In essence, Locke is inconsistent in his claim that all knowledge is founded on sense-experience. The same applies to Berkeley who is fundamentally a metaphysician but claims that all knowledge came from sense-perception. Even Hume who is generally considered as the most consistent Empiricist is not free from platonic influence, this influence can be in Hume's consciousness of the fact that sense-perception alone cannot adequately account for all our knowledge.

By bringing Empiricism to its logical conclusion, Hume brings out its limitations. Plato had already set down in his epistemology the proper limits and consequences of holding tenaciously to Empiricism (*Theaetetus* 191a - 200c).

John Locke in his book *Essays Concerning Human Understanding* attacks the doctrine which originated from Plato. He attempts to show that all the materials for knowledge are derived from sense-experience. He maintains that all ideas must be derived from simple ideas of sense either directly or as a result of the mind's operation on it.

He identifies three degrees of Knowledge: Intuitive Knowledge, demonstrative Knowledge and sensitive knowledge. Intuitive Knowledge bears relation to Plato's theory of forms, Locke classifies it as the highest degree of certainty. He agrees with Descartes that mathematical Knowledge and the Knowledge of our existence are examples of such knowledge.

The second degree of knowledge according to Lockes is the demonstrative knowledge. This is the knowledge acquired in science. It is not absolutely certain. This as Bacon had earlier said, is because we have inadequate knowledge of things, Plato also anticipated this.

The third is sensitive knowledge, it is acquired through sense-perception. Locke's classification of sensitive knowledge as the third and lowest degree shows Platonic influence. Thus Plato's pervasive influence is manifest even in British Empiricism.

Kant came into the scene to reconcile both Rationalism and Empiricism but he became entangled with Plato's epistemology. There are basically two related aspects of Kant's philosophy where Plato's influ-

ence is conspicuously felt. The first is his distinction between the nonumeral world and the phenomenal world. This reflects Plato's distinction between the world of Forms (i.e. the intelligible world) and the World of sense-perception. Kant's distinction of the phenomenal world and the world of forms is an unacknowledged allusion to Plato.

His conception of things as they are in themselves (noumena) as distinct from the way they appear to us (Phenomena) which we perceive with the senses is a reflection of Plato's distinction between Forms and things in this world. Here again we can see that Plato is at work, even in Kant, the giant of modern philosophy.

Hegel and Bradley were also influenced by Platonist and Neo Platonist conception of the intelligible world of forms with a structure of its own.

Hegel's emphasis on the unrestricted power of reason to acquire knowledge shows his Platonic influence, the nature of Hegel's dialectical materialism shows Plato's influence. He explains through his dialectics that Being is the thesis while nothing is the anti-thesis and that becoming is the synthesis. Plato in his epistemology anticipated Hegel in this regard. For Knowledge according to him, corresponds to being, while ignorance corresponds to non-being. The synthesis is belief which also has the potentiality of "becoming".

Besides, Hegel also points out that there is no way of identifying the particulars independently of universals. Sense-Knowledge is for him as for Plato not a direct knowledge of reality. Sense-perception for both of them, is misleading and does not reveal to us the true reality. He distinguishes between universal in sense-perception and intellectual universals. He calls the former the lower universals and the latter the higher universals, which obviously refers to Plato's Forms. Hegel can be seen to be a Platonist.

The slight difference between Bradley and Hegel is not significant in the light of their essential similarity of purpose. Bradley in his book *Principles of Logic* argues that all judgements are conditionally true depending on their relation to the universals which refers to Plato's Forms.

Russell's epistemological importance can be seen in his distinction and knowledge by acquaintance. For Russell all knowledge must be

founded on knowledge by acquaintance, and it is only in this sort of knowledge that error is impossible. This thesis bears some relation to Plato's though Russell might not be willing to admit it.

Plato in his description of how we come by Knowledge in the *Republic*, and in his demonstration of the soul's recollection in *Meno*, *Phaedo symposium* and *Phaedrus* points to the assumption that the main source of our knowledge is through the soul acquaintance with the forms in the world of ideas. The soul has to be acquainted with these Forms before it can understand the particulars in its proper form.

However, Russell's conception of knowledge by acquaintance is slightly different from Plato's because of the eclectic nature of Russell's epistemology. All the same, Plato's influence can be seen in his concept of knowledge by acquaintance.

Whitehead, an English neo-realist claims to be a Platonist in the strictest sense. I. M. Bochenski expresses Whitehead's Platonism by saying that Plato was re-born in Whitehead.¹⁰ Whitehead agrees with objectivism, this is to say that he believes that the world certainly includes acts of cognition and something more. He explains this by saying that our perceptive experience extends beyond the world around us. In perception the mind tries to grasp a part of the system of nature around it. Secondly, history points to the fact that the past is prior to existence. In essence human activity, indicates the existence of the transcendental world.

He acknowledges the existence of error as a result of the individual notes of events so far as, they form part of us. Edmund Husserl's phenomenology is, according to him, the science of the essences of things. The aim in phenomenology is, according to him, to go beyond the existential and particularizing traits of things and get to their essences. To put it in a Platonic Language the aim of Husserl's phenomenology is to go beyond the reflections or shadows of thing and get to their forms. It is only when one succeeds in doing this that one can be said to have acquired the true knowledge of things.

Besides, Husserl's concept of truth as eternal, universal and unchanging shows his Platonism. In short Husserl's phenomenology which he describes as the "science of essences" can also be described as a

Platonic science with a Platonic notion of truth and knowledge.

In conclusion, I shall call the readers attention to Whitehead's words:

"The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato". It is decisively clear from this article that Plato's epistemology has a decisive influence in Western Philosophy from Ancient to contemporary time. The subject matter of philosophy has been clearly shaped by Plato, Philosophers after him either reacted to his philosophy or improved on his imaginative resourcefulness.

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THE NEED FOR PHILOSOPHY AND A CHALLENGE TO AFRICAN PHILOSOPHERS

Review Essay on:

Metaphysics, Phenomenology and African Philosophy,
edited by Jim Unah, Ibadan, Nigeria: Hope Publications, 1996, xvi +
459 pp.

Heidegger's Existentialism: An Essay on Applied Ontology,
by Jim Unah, Lagos, Nigeria: Panaf Publishing Inc., 1996, x + 201pp.

By

Dr. Olusegun Oladipo
Department of Philosophy
University of Ibadan
Ibadan, Nigeria.

Metaphysics, Phenomenology and African Philosophy. What is the relationship between these three areas of philosophy, some essays in which are brought together in the volume edited by Dr. Jim Unah of the Department of Philosophy, University of Lagos?

An adequate answer to this question would require a certain degree of conceptual and historical analyses which is beyond the scope of this review. Suffice it to say that these three areas are aspects of the attempt by philosophers to provide answers to certain basic questions of human existence, such as: What am I? What is the Will? Is it free? Does life have meaning? What is death? Are there gods? What should be the fundamental principles of social organisation? And so on. They are, in short, aspects of the quest for meaning and understanding by those who make thinking about the world and our place in it a life-long perception.

But what is the point of this kind of preoccupation in a world, such as ours, in which the search for the basic means of human existence has become more challenging than ever? In other words, who needs philosophy in a world in which human problems multiply while the means

for resolving them become more and more difficult to come by? The common thread that joins the essays in *Metaphysics, Phenomenology and African Philosophy* is their affirmation that everybody needs philosophy. Indeed, what each of the essays in this volume succeeds in doing is to make a case, implicit or explicit, for the indispensability of philosophy to human existence.

This is how Ayn Rand, an uncompromising objectivist philosopher, puts her belief in this indispensability.

As a human being, you have no choice about the fact that you need a philosophy. Your only choice is whether you define your philosophy in a self-conscious, rational, disciplined process of thought and scrupulously logical deliberation in - or let your subconscious accumulate a junk of unwarranted conclusions, false generalizations, unidentified wishes, doubts and fears thrown together by chance, but integrated by your subconscious into a kind of mongrel philosophy and fused into a single, solid weight: Self-doubt, like a ball and a chain in the place where your mind's wings should have grown'.

Professor Kwasi Wiredu, a foremost African philosopher, makes a similar point when he opines that:

Not everybody need become a professional philosopher, but, to a certain degree, everybody is a philosopher. In truth, no one has a choice whether to have some philosophy or none at all. In this connection we may recall the word of Jesus Christ: 'Man', he said, 'shall not live by bread alone, but by the word of God.'

But if man shall not live without the word of God, even less shall he live without a philosophy, for how, otherwise, shall he attain the very conception of God? How shall he attain a conception of value - of what to live for? How, in short, shall he attain a general and integrated out-

look upon the world in which he lives? Clearly, the choice is not between having and not having a philosophy but rather between having one that is consciously fashioned or an inherited and largely unexamined one²

So, for Ayn Rand and Kwasi Wiredu, as for Jim Unah and other contributors to *Metaphysics, Phenomenology and African Philosophy*, human beings cannot live without a philosophy. But if human beings cannot live without philosophy, they no less can live without metaphysics which, according to Unah, is "the foundation of all knowledge". (p.3). Metaphysics, as a comprehensive account of the world and the place of man in it, is concerned with fundamental questions of human existence, some of which were highlighted at the beginning of this review. These questions are basic or fundamental because they have implications for many things we think, say, or do. If, for instance, a person is a materialist, if, that is, he/she believes in the thesis that everything is material, then he is unlikely to believe in the existence of God or gods, soul, and so on. The implication of this for religion requires no elaborate analysis. In the same vein, if a person is a determinist, if, in other words, he sees human actions as inevitable outcomes of certain antecedent conditions, then he would question our practice of attributing moral blame or merit to human actions.

The examples given above show clearly that metaphysics is not an "old science that has atrophied", nor a mere exercise in analysis meant to clear some linguistic confusions or even an exercise in "occultism, voodooism and parapsychology". Rather, it is simply and squarely a quest for understanding which, according to Richard Taylor, begins from our common sense beliefs and saves us from superficial beliefs and worthless dogmas and creeds.

A significant value of *Metaphysics, Phenomenology and African Philosophy*, then, is that it reminds us of the value of metaphysics. At the same time, it does not fail to acknowledge some of its shortcomings, not least of which is its tendency to become a mere exercise in abstraction which has no relevance to concrete human problems.

But this book is important for another reason.. It shows that the quantitative methods of science do not exhaust the range of paths to the

achievement of human understanding. Indeed, there are certain aspects of reality for which they are inadequate. Such is the case with the phenomenon of consciousness, the analysis of which has been the primary concern of phenomenology as a method of philosophical inquiry. A significant aspect of this method which is highlighted in *Metaphysics, Phenomenology and African Philosophy*, is that phenomenologists do not make any assumption about what is real or not. For them, whatever is the object of consciousness is worthy of investigation. It is in this sense that phenomenology is regarded as a presuppositionless philosophy; phenomenologists suspend all judgements about what is real until a more certain basis for judgement can be found. The significance of this approach to reality lies in the opportunity it provides for the contemplation and description of essences at various levels of meaning of phenomena. This is what is at the basis of the characterisation of phenomenology as "the study of essences" (p. 21), or better still, "a reasoned inquiry which discovers the inherent essences of appearances".⁴

This description of the nature of phenomenology has a practical implication for us which is brought out in the distinction between the natural attitude and the phenomenological or philosophical attitude. The natural attitude is one in which we relate to the world in terms of certain, at times unconscious, activities such as observing, making decisions, having emotions of joy or sadness, entertaining desires, nursing ambitions, and so on, without asking any questions about the rational basis of the world in which we live. In this attitude, which is that of the majority of human beings, what is important is to get on with the business of living, rather than ask fundamental questions about existence. An individual who assumes this attitude may be able to get many things done. However, he/she is unlikely to be able to achieve the kind of understanding which is required for meeting certain significant challenges of human existence. In the same vein, a nation in which this attitude is predominant may continue to survive one way or the other. However, it would lack "a sense of purpose or direction" which is a necessary condition for meeting the challenge of human development.

The most crucial shortcoming of the natural attitude to the world, then, is that it relegates to the background the meaning question, namely,

the question of the rational foundation of the world and the significance of events and processes in our lives. These precisely are the kind of questions that are brought to the fore when a person adopts the philosophical attitude. A person who adopts this attitude does not take the world, including himself, for granted. Such a person seeks to develop "an integrated view of existence" by questioning the basic of the world and seeking to provide answers to the basic, or at any rate some of the basic questions of human existence to which reference has already been made. Only a person who develops this attitude can develop "the ability to think in terms of essentials", thereby freeing himself or herself from most of the prejudices which make human interactions difficult.

It is important to stress this point. For part of the reason for our failure to tackle the problem of social order in Africa has to do with the fact that the predominant attitude among us is the natural attitude. We have, in most cases, been held hostage by our prejudices about the world, be they religious, ethnic, political, economic, and so on, and, consequently, have been unable to contemplate the essence of our being as individuals or as nations. Which is why, barely three years to the end of the twentieth century, we are still unable to develop a wholesome sense of who we are, use mankind's heritage of knowledge to achieve a better life for our people, and establish viable social order in the context of which we can realise our potentials as human beings. This, I dare say, is the essence of the African crisis, the resolution of which would require that we begin to question our beliefs about the world and our societies. Indeed, we need to suspend judgement about the nature of our experience and our world in order to be in a better position to appreciate and examine the full range of the various dimension of this experience.

The foregoing reflections on the nature of phenomenology and its practical applications leads us to the most important highlight of Dr. Unah's *Heidegger's Existentialism: An Essay on Applied Ontology*. This is the reconsideration by this author of the distinction which Heidegger makes between authentic and inauthentic existence. This distinction is usually held to apply to individual life. In this respect, inauthentic existence is one in which an individual in his/her day-to-day

life uncritically accepts the values, belief and prejudices of the mass of mankind in his/her society. He follows, in a typical Zombie-like manner, this mass to do what is considered conventional and fashionable, he is, to appropriate the words of Mary Warnock, content to wear ready-made clothes designed for people in general, to use public transport and public parks, to read newspapers written for people in general, and so on.⁵ He, in short, fails to realise his individuality and potentiality. In authentic existence, on the other hand, the individual begins to realise who he is, he strives to fulfil his potentiality and realise his distinctive character.

It does not require much reflection to see the practical relevance to individual life of the distinction between authentic and inauthentic existence as posited by Heidegger. What is significant in Dr. Unah's analysis of this distinction in *Heidegger's Existentialism*, then, is not the attention he draws to this distinction, but the implications for politics and international cooperations of Heidegger's concept of authenticity. Of particular significance in this regard are two concepts in terms of which Unah characterises the phenomenon of inauthenticity in national life. These are the concept of "confidence-crisis" and that of "fixation-complex". What do these concepts mean? And what is their significance in our situation?

Confidence-crisis describes a situation in which an individual has lost his/her capacity for self-assertion. This loss is manifested in myriad ways, such as: reluctance, due to fear, to take vital decisions; unwillingness to take responsibility for one's action, "lack of courage to venture beyond what is commonplace", resort to helpless imitation, and "the rejection of one's 'factual givens' in preference for alien modes of being" (p. 115). In national life, it manifests itself in inability to develop a coherent ideology which would serve as a framework for thought and action in the areas of politics, economy, education, science and technology, and so on, and the penchant for "testing one alien system of government after another in the hope that one of them would provide a permanent solution to its social and economic problems . . ." (p. 117). So much for Dr. Unah's characterisation of the confidence-crisis which, in my view, has made the realisation of the African promise a daunting

task.

We now come to the other concept in terms of which Unah describes inauthenticity in national life - namely, the concept of "fixation-complex". This concept stands for a situation in which an individual or a nation refuses to part with an idea, belief or way of life even when such an idea, belief or way of life has become anachronistic (p. 122). In drawing our attention to this complex, Unah would wish that we examine our ideas, beliefs and ways of life critically in the light of our prevailing situation. As he says:

There is no necessity for us to hold doggedly to established order of life. Authenticity demands what we live life anew. Any order established by human beings can be replaced with other orders with the passage of time and any system of value prevalent in society can be replaced with other systems which are yet to be perceived. To cling to a particular mode of life when it ought to give way to another pattern of life is to accept to be stunted. Such a state of affairs is a sickness unto death' and it is what we call the 'fixation-complex' (p. 123).

The significance of the concepts of "confidence-crisis" and "fixation-complex" for us as Africans should be clear. What we require now is not to do with a little more energy what we have done hitherto. Rather, we should begin to raise questions which would enable us to see the wrong turns in the path or paths we have taken hitherto and establish the right direction for our quest for freedom and development.

This definition of a basic African requirement in the contemporary world implies a challenge for African philosophy which the essays in the third part of *Metaphysics, Phenomenology and African Philosophy* fails to meet. These essays either concern themselves with the issue, already dated, of the denial of African philosophy or discuss issues in African metaphysics in a manner that does not allow for a critical appraisal of the past and its reconstruction and development as a basis for future possibilities. This is to be regretted. For if, to appropriate the

words of Serequeberhan, the background in which the discourse of African philosophy is foregrounded is one of colonialism and neo-colonialism and their attendant consequences of poverty, misery and underdevelopment⁶, then not much can be gained from an obstinate continuation of the debate on the very possibility of African philosophy which, as Serequeberhan indicates, "dates back to the early 1970s, when challenges to the ethnographic and documentary hegemony of Tempels, John Mbiti and others began to be resisted"⁷ nor from a narration of some of the beliefs African lived by in the past.

It is now time to bring this review to a close. In doing so, I wish to draw attention, again, to the importance of philosophy to human life to which the two books under review draw our attention in a significant manner by quoting a philosopher who has exerted a significant influence on some of the philosophers discussed in these two books, in particular Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. My reference here is to the German philosopher, W. Dilthey.

According to Dilthey:

The functions of philosophy are related to the teleological structure of both the philosophizing subject and of society. They are acts in which a person looks into himself and yet affects his environment; he does the same in religion and poetry. So philosophy is an activity which springs from the need of the individual man to reflect on what he does, to shape and regulate his actions inwardly and to form a stable relationship to the whole of human society, at the same time, it is a function based on the structure of society and needed for a perfect life, a function, therefore, which is carried on in the same way in many minds and links them in a social and historical bond. In this latter respect, it is a cultural system. For the characteristics of such a system are that the activities of the individuals which belong to it are similar and that there is a bond between the individuals in which the activity takes place.

In this quotation from Dilthey, we see, again, an appreciation of the need for philosophy in our quest for knowledge of the world and socio-historical reality. We also see, however, a hint at the importance of communication in the development of philosophical scholarship and the establishment of its relevance. Yet, what we see with regard to modern African philosophy is the fact that it has not become a cultural system in the sense in which Dilthey uses this phrase in the above passage. On the one hand, the activities of African philosophers are not at the moment backed by a common social and historical bond. On the other hand, the kind of link or contact with society which would ensure that philosophy performs its functions of enabling a person to look at himself and affect his environment is not there. The question of how these problems of philosophical scholarship in Africa can be tackled is a crucial challenge which African philosophers could only neglect at their own peril.

Notes

- 1 Ayn Rand, *Philosophy: Who Needs It* (USA: Penguion Books, 1984), p. 5.
- 2 Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture* (Canbridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 143.
- 3 Richard Taylor, *Metaphysics* (USA: Practice-Hall International Inc. 4th edition, 1992), p. 7.
- 4 David Stewart and Algis Mickunas, *Exploring Phenomenology* (USA: American Library Association, 1974), p. 1.
- 5 See Mary Warnock, *Existentialism* (Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 55.
- 6 Tsenay Serequeberhan *Hermeneutics of African philosophy: Horizon and Discourse* (New York, & London: 1994), p. 6.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p.3.
- 8 *Dilthey: Selected Writings*, edited and intrduced by H. P. Rickman (Cambridge University Press, 1976). P. 130.

THE PROBLEM OF DEFINITION IN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

By

Godwin Azenabor
Dept. of Philosophy
University of Lagos

Problem of Definition? Oh No! Not again! This, perhaps, is what comes to your mind on sighting this tittle. You may be tempted to say that the issue of definition is already over-flogged; we have passed this stage, we should be doing African philosophy now and or reconstructing the history of African philosophy. Yes, indeed, it seems that we have advanced beyond the level of definition. But contemporary works on African philosophy prove to the contrary - they indicate that even the realm which we believe we are now in is an off-shoot of the problem of definition and the nature of African philosophy. And, how can we really be doing or re-constructing what we have not actually understood or known its nature?

The question of the nature of philosophy and African philosophy is relevant, and will always be asked in every age. The importance of definition in any intellectual enterprise cannot be over-emphasized. Understanding the nature of anything is a formidable task especially in academic circle. This is because academicians, more than any group of people are intellectually cantankerous and ideologically unyielding. Scarcely is there any academic subject which has so much misapprehension as philosophy.

The history of African philosophy has shown that it has given rise to some salient problems. C.S.Momoh,² for example, identified at least six of such problems. In this paper, we argue that the most crucial of the problems is that of definition - other problems are off-shoot of the problem of definition. The way other problems and questions are tackled or addressed depends on what one takes African philosophy to be.

We also show how the problem of definition has divided philosophers into different schools of thought. We argue that the problem of

definition is better examined within some schools of thought in African philosophy, and then identify the distinguishing feature of African philosophy in the metaphysical principle in which it is nourished.

THE CONCEPT OF AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

Today, the most embarrassing question a philosopher can be asked is "what is African philosophy?". This is because the nature of African philosophy is not well understood. Philosophers are divided into numerous hostile camps and schools of thought on this issue. The question of definition is rendered more problematic because definitions by their nature are subjective and riddled with linguistic analysis. Most definitions are perspectival.

In defining African Philosophy, we take cognisance of the nature of philosophy. A cursory look at the history of philosophy shows that the nature of philosophy is diverse. Philosophy has been contemplative and speculative in nature. There is also the conception of philosophy as a process of asking fundamental and critical questions - this is the socratic approach. There are the theological approach, linguistic approach and the analytic and scientific approaches to philosophy. There is also the conception of philosophy as a social consciousness. But which ever way we look at philosophy, it should be noted that philosophy can be viewed from both the *method* and *content* points of view.

From the method point of view "philosophy goes with criticism, scepticism and refusal to believe unless on rational grounds".¹ Philosophy goes with arguments, reflections, rationality and critical evaluation. In fact argument is a decisive characteristic of philosophy. "Without intuitive argument and clarification, there is strictly no philosophy".² A philosopher is one who is a professional thinker, equipped with the intuitive insight and rational stamina to delve, more than superficially, into the different and complex problems of life and living. "Take nothing for granted", is the dictum of the philosopher. This definition is from the point of view of method.

There is also the conception of philosophy from the point of view of *content*. Here, cognisance is taken that philosophy is divided into four core areas, viz- metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and logic. (The later, strictly speaking, is a method or tool in philosophy). In this respect,

we see that philosophy is simply the search for the *ultimate* -ultimate reality, is metaphysics, ultimate *truth*, is epistemology, ultimate goal and value is ethics.

Apart from the conception of philosophy from the method and the content points of view, we have what is been referred to as the philosophy of the infrastructure of disciplines, in which the philosopher inquire into other substantive area of intellectual enterprise, like history, Education, Law, Science, Social Science, Mathematics, Religion etc. The philosophy of infrastructure of disciplines, is a second order activity which deals with the general theories, character, problems and pre-suppositions in other disciplines. It is the application of philosophical method to other disciplines.

The above analysis of the nature of philosophy shows that the concept or meaning of philosophy changes according to the challenges of a period. This is precisely why philosophy has been idealistic, rationalistic, theological, ideological, analytical, speculative, humanistic, scientific, at various point in time. The important thing to note however, is that in all the phases, it is the wisdom of life that is being sought.

Having understood the nature of philosophy, what then is African philosophy? It was Gene Blocker who bluntly states that "we cannot resolve the problem of African philosophy, until we first of all settle the meaning of 'African' and the word 'Philosophy'".⁵ We have already settled the word philosophy, so we begin by settling the word 'African' and then 'African Philosophy'.

The term 'African' is a racial geographical entity. It is a continent peopled by members of a particular race, which could be black, White, Arab, Negro, etc., but definitely with similar culture, common history of colonial experience and tutelage. The need to clarify this term 'African' is necessitated by the fact that some scholars have pointed out that Africans are not one but many races and are people with diversity of language, culture, traditions and belief systems. It is therefore argued that it may be difficult to talk of an African philosophy, but easier to talk of "African Philosophies"⁶. But then, there are still common traits and unity, in spite of the diversity of forms in Africa. It is

precisely because of these unitary elements that enable us to talk of "African Philosophy" instead of "African Philosophies."

Now, what is African philosophy, or what distinguishes a particular philosophy as African? What is the Africanness⁷ of a philosophy? The answer to this question has been attempted by the different schools of thought. It is pertinent therefore for us at this juncture to acquaint ourselves with the various schools of thought in African philosophy, in order for us to understand the root of the answer to the question "what is African philosophy?"

The Schools of Thought in African Philosophy

Difficult as it may seem to group philosophers who animate the contemporary scene in African philosophy into basic schools of thought, especially because of the diversity in their thoughts an attempt is nonetheless made here at a grouping, taking into cognizance the publications of scholars, the trends in discussions at seminars and conferences.

Different schools of thought emerging in philosophical enterprise could be explainable in the fact that "every person who is actually absorbed in any given form of experiences is by this every absorption committed to the opinion that no other form is valid, that his form is the only one adequate to the comprehension of reality"⁸. Hence we have different schools of thought in philosophy today, like, Rationalism, Empiricism, Scepticism, Idealism, Pragmatism, Mysticism, Positivism, etc. In African Philosophy, the problem of definition has divided scholars into various schools of thought and there are even sub-schools within the schools. Each scholar tries to answer the question, "what is African philosophy?" from the perspective of its school of thought.

Philosophers who discuss the problems in African Philosophy, do so against the background of schools of thought.⁹ In the study of African Philosophy, P.O. Bodunrin identified two schools of thought.¹⁰ On the one hand are those he calls the "Traditionalists" or "ethno philosophers" and on the other hand are the "modernists" or "scientific philosophers".

It is along this line that Olusegun Oladipo¹¹ identifies two major

orientations in contemporary African philosophy. These are, the "analytic" and the "Traditionalist" schools of thought.

The above classification and terminologies need urgent clarification. We refuse to endorse the term 'Traditional' because the expression, as Momoh rightly argues, is offensive and carries the implication, probably not always intended, that Africans have not been trying, or worse still, ought not to try to philosophise. Moreover

The attempt to establish African Philosophy as a respectable discipline, has been impaired by this thought that it is traditional thought is not traditional because, the word 'traditional' ---drips with the images of maivete, low intellect, stagnation and crudity.¹²

The term "ethno - Philosophy" is also not appropriate to describe all African philosophy in the traditional setting, because not all philosophy here is collective or mere world views. We still have individuals in the traditional societies, who are intellectuals, critical and reflective of their community world views. Using the power of reason, rather than the celebrated beliefs of the communal consensus and explanations, these individuals have produced philosophical system worth the study. Again, ethno-philosophy is only a sub-school any way, in a school of thought, which we shall later discern.

The other classification by Bodunrin is equating philosophy with science. Philosophy does not have its roots in science before it can pass as philosophy. This is a narrow conception of philosophy. Philosophy concerns itself with those areas which lie beyond the field of scientific view. Philosophy is more of an art, philosophy delves into the wisdom of a people, their mysteries, culture and traditions. Philosophy is a normative science not an empirical science. So, Bodunrin here confuses the nature of philosophy with that of science. He failed to realise that philosophy is very unlike science. In philosophy, there are no proof but arguments, and there are no questions which can be decided on a 'yes' and 'No' basis. In fact philosophy is not interested in the truth or falsity of a statement, rather coherence, rationality, logic, etc., are the incurrence of philosophy. Philosophy is not like science which operates

in three worlds; the world of the scientist, the world of data collecting and the world of laboratory test. The philosopher's equipment are his brains, his power of thought, intellect and reflection. The scientist may find it wise to write philosophically, but the philosopher will definitely not find it wise to write scientifically or else much would remain unsaid that should be said. One more point to note - "The philosopher probes deeper and looks further than the scientist".¹³

To Olusegun Oladipo's classification of analytic school, we point out that the history of philosophy shows that philosophy had not been only a matter of analysis. Philosophy has been much more than this. Analysis is a second order activity. Philosophy has also been of First order activity, which is a system building enterprise, an enterprise of synthesis. This aspect of philosophy is often original.

The second order philosophy, on the other hand, is a critical and piece meal activity, this is analytical and atomistic. A second order philosophy is predominantly that of querying, interpreting, criticising and defending the answer given by the system builder who is a first order philosopher. Bodunrin and Oladipo's orientations in African Philosophy seem to disregard or de-emphasize the first order philosophy, thereby narrowing the concept of philosophy. To accept this is to place great limitations upon philosophic discussions and restrict philosophic activity to an intolerable extent.

Analysis, it must be noted, is a meta-activity and only a tool in philosophy; it is not the essence of philosophy. "The essence of philosophy is the metaphysical urge to penetrate into the heart of the whole of the given world for valid knowledge, it seeks to solve the very riddle of the world and of life"¹⁴

It is against this background of the inadequacies in Bodunrin and Oladipo's classification, that we must understand C.S. Momoh's identification of three schools of thought in African Philosophy, viz:- the Purist school, the Theological school and the African logical neo-positivism school of thought.¹⁵ We add the forth and fifth schools- African Ideological school and Marxist orientation in African Philosophy.

The *Purist school* as the name implies sees the need for purity of

thought and ideas in African Philosophy, free from foreign influences and culture. Scholars in this school argue that fundamental questions, similar to those in Western philosophy are also raised in African Philosophy and answers are also attempted. They maintain that there is a spirit of African philosophy. African philosophy, it is argued, should be orientated towards African environment, basic assumptions, culture and goal. Those in the purist school have been identified as, C.S. Momoh, Barry Hallen, Innocent Onyewunyi, J.O. Sodipo, S.B. Oluwole, K.C. Anyanwu, Jim Unah, Enyeribe Onuoha and M.A. Makinde, to an extent. Scholars in this school are said not only to have asserted the existence of African Philosophy or defined African Philosophy positively, they have also presented specific contents in the area of ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, politics and even medicine in African Philosophy.

In spite of the unity of thought in this school, there are still diversity of forms, different stance, and sub-schools. For example, ethno - philosophy is a sub-school in the purist school of thought. Here, the approach is communal in out look, rather than individual. The customs and belief of a people are presented. More of emotion, than reflection, is said to predominate. Example of a scholar here is J. S. Mbiti.

Even when we take a look at what has been called ethno-philosophy, it is not clear why the collective thought and belief of a people or group, cannot be a subject for philosophy.

The theological school, are colonial scholars who approach the subject of African philosophy from the religious point of view. To them, all the philosophical thought of African can best be expressed and understood from the point of view of religion. Examples of scholars in this school are J. Sodipo, K. C. Anyanwu, W. Abraham, C. B. Okolo and P. Temples. Sodipo, for example, tells us that the goal of Yoruba literary endeavour is religion.

To K.C. Anyanwu, the whole of African philosophy is religious in orientation. Here philosophy is related only to the spiritual and supernatural elements of experience. The satisfaction here is not the rational but the emotional and aesthetic.

A sub-group within the theological school "sees African philosophy as beginning properly from the period when we were exposed to missionary and colonial education"¹⁶. In this sub-school, we have scholars like, C. B. Okolo, William Abraham, Placide Temples etc. To these scholars, there was strictly no philosophy before colonial education.

While we agree that philosophy shares with religion questions and issues concerning fundamental and ultimate causes and the totality of the universe and our role in it, we point out that philosophy and Religion differ in methodology. Whereas Religion relies for its information on faith and authority of a revealed truth, philosophy works exclusively with reason and arguments.

There is the *African Logical neo-Positivism School*. This School is Classified as "Those philosophers who are either, on the one hand, not excited about the claims and content of African philosophy and who consequently query them or, on the other hand, those philosophers who absolutely denied the existence of African Philosophy."¹⁷ The point is that the African logical neo-Positivists either deny the existence of African philosophy outright or query the methodology, claims and content of African Philosophy. Examples of scholars in this schools are, P. O. Bodunrin, K. Wiredu, P. Hountondji, Odera Oruka and to an extent Robin Horton.¹⁸ These scholars are those engaged in applying the paradigm of Logical Positivism in Western Philosophy to works in African philosophy. In the spirit of positivism, they embrace scientific orientation, believing that science is a pre-requisite for philosophy. Hear Hountondji:

*The development of Philosophy is in some way a function of the development of the sciences ... We shall never have in Africa a Philosophy in the strict sense until we have produced in Africa, a history of science, a history of the sciences.*¹⁹

In a similar vein, Wiredu writes that the African Philosopher must use the methods of science, because they are necessary conditions for rapid modernization.²⁰

M. A. Makinde, of University of Ife, has been said to refer to this school or group of scholars as "Euro-African Philosophers", because

they are exhibiting in philosophy the well known African preference for things European. In fact, the philosophers in this school were mainly trained in Western Philosophical tradition and are therefore influenced by their training abroad, which is more of the analytic tradition. In this respect, Makinde has also described them as the "African Vienna Circle".²¹ This latter terminology is further buttressed by P. O. Bodunrin himself, who claims to be doing just what Ayer did in *Language, Truth and Logic*, that is, expounding, explaining, and defending the views of a school of thought.

The African logical neo-positivism school, who fashion their methodology after that of the West do not seem to know how ideas originated in the West, and the functions and limitations of such ideas. And even when such ideas have been discarded or have perished and

new ones have taken their place, they are still condemned by ignorance to continue to re-echo them. For example, the African logical Neo-positivists should have known from the evidence of contemporary physics that Western Philosophy is now making a u-turn from science. "We are now living at a time when science at its highest power, has entered the spiritual world and has transferred the mind of the observer himself, raising it to a place which is no longer that of scientific intelligence, now proved to be inadequate"²² The African logical neo-positivists have forgotten that the greatest aspect of human knowledge does not come from science but from personal experience.

There is the Universalist sub-school in African logical neo-positivism. Here, the universalist thesis is to talk of universal philosophy - that any subject matter of philosophy will be a topic for the philosophers in general, irrespective of their national or racial affiliations. The truth of philosophy, it is argued, can be proved by methods which are independent of any personal, national or racial value and feelings. This, the universalist argues, is a universal way of writing, doing and teaching philosophy, whether in Africa, Asia, Europe or America. Representatives of this sub-school are P.O. Bodunrin, Odera Oruka and K. Wiredu.

To this position, C.S. Momoh, observes that "even though propo-

sitions of philosophy claim timelessness and universality, they do have roots, and these roots are often psychological, cultural, political and experiential.²³

Against the universalist stance, we point out that philosophy is always based on certain cultural experience, socio-historical context and societal consciousness, at any point in time. "The starting point of any philosophy . . . is a particular man in particular circumstance".²⁴ Every philosophy is therefore limited by its culture, history and experience. This is why there can be nothing like a "universal philosophy". Philosophy is culture bound. "There is no universal method, at least no objective one, for deriving a philosophy from a value of a given experience. That is why we find two philosophers drawing two opposing theories from the same assemblage of facts."²⁵

To say that a philosophy is culture-bound does not however, mean that a philosophy cannot be trans-cultural. For example, Marx philosophy, even though was cultural, had trans-cultural relationship with the people of Russia and China, that is why his philosophy form a crucial aspect of the philosophy of contemporary Russia and China.

If by universal philosophy we mean the common elements, in terms of tools used in philosophy, fair enough. Apart from this, "universalism", in the words of Abraham Kaplan, "betrays a radical misunderstanding of philosophy. Like language, religion and Art, philosophy has its roots deeply anchored in the cultures of which it is part and product. Just as there cannot be a universal language, unless and until there is a universal community ---, So also, --- is the situation with respect to philosophy . . ." ²⁶ so to speak of a philosophy that is valid for all peoples all cultures, at all times and in all places is objectively speaking impossible. The fact of the history of philosophy indicates that all philosophical doctrines attempt, theoretically, to prove, substantiate and deduce their proposition from certain assumptions, conception of things viewed from cultural lenses. "Every age has its own age, has its own peculiar attitude towards the problems which man's environment presents, its own peculiar attitudes towards, the world . . ." ²⁷.

The African Ideological School of thought need not be examined

in details because this school is already well articulated and established in African socio-political philosophy. Leading scholars in this school include, Leopold Senghor, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Nnamdi Azikwe and Obafemi Awolowo.

In this school, attempt is made to develop unique political theory based on African socialism, welfarism or communism and family hood. It is argued that a true meaningful freedom must be accompanied by a true mental liberation and a return, whenever possible and desirable, to genuine and authentic traditional African humanism.

Marxist Orientation in African Philosophy

This is an emerging school, represented by Olusegun Oladipo of University of Ibadan. This school claims to be pre-occupied with the real problem of African philosophy. The real problem, according to him, is not that of definition, it is not that of schools of thought either. "Rather, the problem is that of the extent to which philosophers have been able to put their intellect in the service of the struggles and destiny of African people".²⁹ This is pragmatic in approach.

Our next task is to see the different perspectives or conditions that have been set as necessary for a philosophy to be African and then situate them against the different schools of thought as outlined above. Thereafter, we shall see how the problem of definition has affected other problems in African philosophy.

Schools of Thought and their Conception of African Philosophy.

In her article, "The Africanness of a Philosophy"²⁸, S. B. Oluwole, discusses extensively what makes a piece of literary work 'African' what marks out the Africanness of a philosophy. She examines some broad outlines or direction in which a satisfactory answer could be sought. The Africanness of a philosophy, according to her, has been identified in terms of:

- 1 **Mystical and Magical**, especially as portrayed by Temples in his *Bantu Philosophy*.
- 2 **Religious, emotional and or aesthetic satisfaction**, especially

as portrayed by J. O. Sodipo, Barry Hallen and K. C. Anyanwu and J. S. Mbiti.

- 3 **Basic assumptions about reality**, as portrayed by K. C. Anyanwu and P. Temples. Here, the Africanness of a philosophy is proved as a deterministic feature of the human mind - whereas, according to S. B. Oluwole, this cannot be.
- 4 **Mode of understanding, i.e. metaphysical and epistemological Feature**, especially as portrayed by Senghor in his 'Negritude'. But, according to Oluwole, there is no single metaphysical or epistemological positions that can define the Africanness of a philosophy C. S. Momoh, is of a different persuasion.

To Momoh, African philosophy is better defined from the metaphysical perspective. This is because, many philosophers already agree that African philosophy is a philosophy rich in metaphysics. Since metaphysics is the theory of the universe, African philosophy is consequently, or simply, African doctrine on the universe, the creator, the elements, the institutions, beliefs and concepts in it. He writes::

*Any philosophical work, in the direction of the moral, metaphysical the spiritual, the intuitive or even the mystical is within the tradition of Ancient African philosophy*³⁰

Here, the distinguishing feature of African philosophy is metaphysical.

5. The Africanness of a Philosophy has also been identified in terms of the *Goal or direction* of the philosophy.

S.B. Oluwole, on her part identifies with the goal of the philosophy, in determining African philosophy. She went ahead to identify the African literary goal as that of *humanism*. Humanism, if we may recall, is an orientation in philosophy geared towards improving the condition of man. A humanistic goal of thought according to Oluwole, is sensitive to human feelings, behaviours and existence. This humanism sets the pattern of African thoughts and defines their style, methodology and terms of expression³¹ Since African philosophy has humanism as its goal, Oluwole argues, it cannot take analysis as its central focus as it in the West. Rather, what it takes as its central focus, is interpretation (not emotion and intuition as popularly believe). This attitude of interpretation,

constitutes a viable alternative goal to analysis, she posits.

It has however been observed that when talking of the goal of a philosophy, we should realise that Africa, unlike Britain or France, is a whole continent not just a country. "Thus no body identifies European philosophy as Empiricism, Rationalism or Idealism, even though each of these brands occurred at different times and in different countries of Europe"³². Because of this, Oluwole argues that "the demand for a characterization of the Africanness of a philosophy cannot be a requisite for the identification of one particular philosophy that predominates over all others produced here in Africa".³³

Now, does it mean that Oluwole's goal of humanism in African philosophy is not found as a feature of philosophy in the West? No, not that. The point is that the Africanness of the goal of humanism as a mode of thought lies in the fact that an element, not a philosophy or school of thought, predominates the literary endeavor in Africa as it never did in the history of Western Philosophy. It is this predominance that makes it particularly African. But then the principle underlying Oluwole's humanism is metaphysical. Hence Humanism is reductable from metaphysics.

We note that outlines 1 to 5 are trade marks of the Purist School of thought, all pigeon holed in their various sub-schools. Outline 5, in particular, also has a leaning on African ideological school. Outlines 6 and 7 that now follow are characteristics of the African logical neo-Positivism.

6. **Geographical Origin of the Author**, especially as portrayed by P. J. Hountondji and P. O. Bodunrin. Here, it is argued that African philosophy is African, precisely because its author is an African by origin. Over and above this, his work is addressed to Africans for appreciation and benefit. In other words, it is enough for a philosopher to be African in order to claim to have produced an African philosophy. The topic need not be on African philosophy or on African experience, it is further argued.

The view of geographical origin as a determinant of African philosophy, has however been refuted. It has been said that the mere accident of the place of birth of a philosopher cannot serve

as an adequate criterion for classifying his work as African. Instead of talking about geography, we should in fact be talking more of history. This is because African philosophy cannot adequately be fashioned without considering the history, traditions, culture and experience, as the appropriate soil upon which it is to grow. This is precisely where the content as a factor in determining the Africanness of a philosophy comes to play. The content must be African in character, so must its subject matter and conceptual framework. There is always a spirit of African philosophy. This is why African philosophy has been defined as a reflection on African experience and reality. And the African reality is metaphysically holistic.

The question of geographical origin is further watered down because Wittgenstein, a German by origin, produced an English philosophy and Temples a Belgian, is said to have produced an African philosophy (the limitations of Temples' attempt notwithstanding). The point is that a non-African can produce an African philosophy, and a philosophy propounded by an African is not necessarily an African philosophy. For example, when Wiredu wrote this scholarly master piece on "Truth as Opinion", his article contained nothing specifically African, until he introduced to his work aspects which were clearly influenced by African culture. So, for a philosophy to be African, it must deal with themes and problems of African culture. When an African or a non-African philosopher writes on how African (whether ancient or modern Africans) make sense of their existence and the world in which they live, he or she does a truly African philosophy.

7. A seventh criterion for the Africanness of a philosophy, seems to have been set by Wiredu, Hountondji and Bodunrin, in terms of *the appropriation and dependence on a set ideas* (originated or borrowed).

To these scholars, philosophy need not be set in an African context before it is properly defined as African philosophy. As Wiredu points out that

For a set of ideas to be a genuine possession of a people they need not have originated from them, they need only appropriate them, make use of them and if the

*spirit, so moves them thrive on them"*³⁴

Buttressing this point further, Hountondji, argues ::

*Just as the anthropological study of African societies by Western scholars belong to Western literature, like wise the philosophical studies of the Western tradition by African scholars are part and parcel of the African Philosophical literature as are all philosophical investigations made by Africans about concepts which may have no special or privilege links with African experience.*³⁵

To Hountondji therefore, Wiredu's work on "Kant's synthetic Priori in Geometry" for example, is a work on African Philosophy! Wiredu also supports Hountondji in this stance and in fact help to expound and defend it. Bodunrin, also presenting the view of the African logical neo-positivism school of thought, argues that:

*....African philosophy is the one done by African philosophers, whether it be in the area of logic, metaphysics, ethics or history of philosophy. It is desirable that the works be set in some African context, but it is not necessary that they be so. Thus, if African philosophers were to engage in debates on plato's epistemology, or on theoretical identities their works would qualify as African Philosophy.*³⁶

Thus, to Hountondji, Wiredu and Bodunrin, (all Core African logical neo-positivists) any philosophical work by African philosopher is African philosophy!. The problem is that they are confusing the question of the existence of African philosophy with the question of the existence of African Philosophers, and according to W. Abraham, "the question whether there is an African philosophy must be distinguished from the question whether there are African philosopher"³⁷. This is because there could be African philosophers without there being African philosophy, but there can not be African philosophy without African philosophers.

To conclude the question of definition of African Philosophy, we make bold to say that the Africanness of a philosophy can be found in

the style of the philosophy, in the type of questions raised, meaning and understanding sought within the bias and context of an African cultural setting and experience, with a grounding on African metaphysics. It is this type of orientation that determines an African philosophy. This is precisely what makes Barry Hellen's work on "the Yoruba concept of ori", for example, to fall within the works on African philosophy. Even though the author is an American, his philosophy can never be called an American philosophy but African Philosophy. So, we should be careful not to confuse works on African philosophy with works by African philosophers.

THE PROBLEM OF DEFINITION AND OTHER PROBLEMS IN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

The problem of definition has also affected other problems in African philosophy. It is in an attempt to solve this problem of definition that the question or problem of methodology emanated, each scholar portraying again the views of a school of thought.

The problem of definition has also given rise to the *problem of language*. Here, it is argued that for a philosophy to be truly African, not only must its content or spirit be African, but so must the language and form in which it is expressed. The question of language is important because language is the tool of the philosopher, it is the vehicle of his thought. For historical reasons, which I believe we all know, the African scholar writes in foreign languages. Whereas in his philosophical meditation and during conversation with elders in the traditional settings, African scholar communicates in an African language, but does not finally write in this language. The problem here, as it relates to that of definition, is that, it has been argued that there can be no African philosophy until there is a philosophy in African language(s), not just an interpretation. This is because, the English philosophy for example, is written in English, Chinese philosophy in Chinese language, French philosophy in French, German Philosophy, in German language, etc, but African philosophy, is still being written and communicated in foreign languages. These foreign languages, it is argued, many not depict the true picture of reality in African Philosophy.

It is precisely this problem, according to Makinde, "that has led to

scepticism about African philosophy by some contemporary African philosophers"³⁸. The point simply put, is that African philosophy should be taught and written in African languages.

One might argue that the problem of language is really not philosophical but linguistic and its emergence is as a result of semantics and vocabulary. Afterall, African philosophy is not alone in the use of foreign languages to communicate African Studies. There are other disciplines such as African history, African literature etc., which are still being written and communicated in English and French. Why should that of philosophy be different? We need not write in African language in order to make our work African. What we are doing presently, is to express our thoughts in a language that is universally understandable or intelligible. This does not rule out the possibility of writing in our traditional language. But the point is that the language of communicating African philosophy need not be African before it can pass as African philosophy, all that is important is to avoid foreign categories and models.

The problem of definition also brings us to the question of a *written tradition*. The argument here is that we cannot have an African philosophy without a written tradition. Scholars like Bodunrin, and Hountondji of the African logical neo-positivism school and C. B. Okolo of the theological school of thought, argue that there is simply no philosophy in the traditional African societies because a people without a literate civilization cannot really have a philosophy. The implication of this in the problem of definition of African philosophy, is that in defining African philosophy, we have to begin from the time we were exposed to Western Civilization.

But we argue that writing cannot be a precondition or pre-requisite for philosophy, because philosophy is professional thinking and one must think a thought before writing it down. If philosophy begins with wonder, as Plato wants us to believe, then the question that has always been asked is what role does writing or literacy have to play in wonder? Writing is not the only form of transmitting thought, apart from the written tradition, discussions, debates, conversations, oral traditions, Art, symbols, etc., are part of a philosophers work.

"Writing is definitely irrelevant in the process of fruitful thinking"³⁹

In fact, the case of socrates who never wrote and is still an acclaimed philosopher is a standing testimony. But then, there is the argument that we cannot have a socrates without writing. This is very true. Had Plato not written down the sayings of socrates, so the argument goes, we would not have today regarded him as a philosopher. This is precisely the reason why we have also decided to make field research in order to have the thoughts or philosophy of the African elders in writing. In fact, this is the basis of C. S. Momoh's stimulating plea, that "African philosophers should go into the field, as they go into the library to study Ayer's work for example, and hold discussions with African elders on philosophical matters, documenting their findings for posterity⁴⁰. If this is done, then just as socrates was raised on a literate culture, the African elders would be raised by us modern scholars.

One must however concede that the absence of writing makes the retrieval of the history of thought difficult. Again, it is quite in conceivable that a purely oral tradition could have formed, preserved and transmitted across generations as a written tradition could, especially in modern time. This may be the reason why, in modern time, writing is regarded as an indispensable condition for philosophy. This however, is not to say that the unwritten tradition is unphilosophical. It is only that the written thought is, perhaps, a better ways of transmitting thought in modern time.

CONCLUSION

It is instructive to note that the problem of definition in African philosophy is a spill-over from the problem of definition in philosophy itself. There is no universally acceptable definition of philosophy. The problem of definition of African philosophy not withstanding, African philosophy has come of age. Today, it is an essential part of the university curriculum.

It is important to note that the divisions into schools are not absolute, but one of emphasis. We have highlighted the aforementioned schools of Thought, not because they are necessarily the only ones, but because they are representative, fairly completely and

internally coherent.

Any attempt to define an authentic African philosophy presupposes the question of the existence of a tradition of African philosophy. It has been argued by scholars that African philosophy is better characterized, not by racial dimension, nor by the content or methodology of the thought but by the tradition of philosophy. The African philosophical tradition is rooted in and nourished within the context of African culture, history and experience, which is essentially metaphysical.

Any philosophical tradition has an existential base. The style and or existential base of African philosophy is really the emphasis on the metaphysical. The epistemological, humanistic, logical or scientific values as being hampered on by various scholars are aspects of the metaphysical nature of African philosophy. The style of African philosophy is a multi-dimensional one which give room for the existence of different types of realities. This is holism; a distinguishing feature of African philosophy. Holism acknowledge the fact that knowledge or truth is not one but many. Holism is an ontology that accepts diversity with an eye for synthesis of human knowledge and this synthesis is made possible by the nature of African metaphysics.

Using this holistic style of expression in African cultural experience as a basis, we can argue for and justify the primacy of the Purist School of thought in African philosophy. This is because it has the potential to dissolve most of the seemingly problematic questions created due to the bias of other schools of thoughts. Moreover, the Purist school attempts to propose a more positive and genuine African philosophy, whereas, the other schools are still very often at a loss in giving direct and cogent answer to the question of African philosophy. The Purist school's conception of philosophy is wider in scope, understanding and interpretation, while the conception of others is narrower.

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 - 10 See P. O. Bodunrin (ed.) *Philosophy in Africa: Trends and Perspectives*, Ile - Ife: University of Ife, Press Ltd., 1985.
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 - 14 Wilhelm Dilthey: *The Essence of Philosophy*, Trans by Stephen A. Emery and William J. Emery, (New York; A.M.S. Press, 1967), p. 26.
 - 15 C. S. Momoh: "Issues in African Philosophy" *op. cit.*
 - 16 *Ibid.*, p. 14.
 - 17 *Ibid.*

- 18 It is instructive to note that almost all the members of the African Logical neo Positivism school, except P. J. Hountondji perhaps, are beginning to have a second thought about their sceptical position on African philosophy.
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- 21 If we may recall, it was at the vienna circle, that the term "logical positivism" in Western Philosophy was coined to characterise the stand point of a group of philosophers, scientists, mathematicians and linguistic, analytical and empirical philosophers. Logical positivism is also known as Neo-positivism.
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GENERAL STUDIES COURSES OUTLINE

(i) GST 102: PHILOSOPHY AND LOGIC - 2 CREDITS

A brief survey of the scope, notions, branches and problems of philosophy. Symbolic Logic. Special symbols in Symbolic Logic. Conjunction, affirmation, negation, disjunction, Equivalence and conditional statements. Laws of thought. The method of deduction, using rules of inference and biconditionals. Quantification theory.

(ii) GST 104. HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE - 2 CREDITS

Man - his origin and nature: man and his cosmic environment; scientific methodology; science and technology in the society and service of man; renewable and non-renewable resources - man and his energy resources Environmental effects of chemicals, plastics, textiles, wastes and other materials. Chemical and radio chemical hazards. Introduction to the various areas of science and technology.

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