

THE ANCIENT, MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY: THE LINGERING PROBLEMS OF PHILOSOPHY (SOLVED AND UNSOLVED)

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ABSTRACT

The study of Philosophy is a special area to study as a subject matter. The question as to what philosophy is very difficult to answer. Various philosophers tend to give different answers to the same questions with accompanied reasons to justify their opinionated answers. This may suggest the whole components of Philosophy where the philosophers in a fundamental manner differ in their aims and approach of a given subject. Philosophy has been an ideal subject matter for centuries now. It has evolved overtime. Philosophy has risen from the period at which it was seen as a metaphysical subject to the present day where it is seen to be foundation and bedrock of all other subjects. Philosophy has revolved and evolved from the Ancient philosophy, to modern philosophy and then, contemporary philosophy. However, notwithstanding the stage and historical timing of the stage of philosophy; there are problems which confront philosophy. The following fundamental problems of philosophy will be dealt with among many: appearance and reality, essence and existence, religion and existence of God, evil, mind and body and problem of knowledge. Thus, it shows that philosophy is generally meant for the purpose of clarification or solution. This paper attempts to discuss the problems of philosophy; whether solved or unsolved; which has caused a Philosophical thought at any stage of development of philosophy. The paper starts with an Introduction; and proceeds to choose fundamental problems which philosophy has attempted to solve or needs to solve and finally, a conclusion.

KEYWORDS: *Philosophy, Ancient, Modern, Contemporary, Lingered, Problem*

INTRODUCTION

Since the inception of the existence of man in the world; man has been in constant search for answers to many issues, concepts, ideas, etc. It implies that everything surrounding man worth being explained. Man demands to know why he is in the world and why he is to die thereafter, man questions his feelings, his being and intuition. These attributes of man is so unconsciously present that man can be said to have ever given up on getting the needed answers to the fundamental questions being raised.

There are for the purpose of this paper, three distinct periods or stages of philosophy or philosophical development. At each of these periods; there were overwhelming problems which were faced by philosophers of that period.

Ancient period of philosophy is further categorised into Pre-Socratic and Socratic era. Whereas, Pre-Socratic is the era before the relevance influence of Socrates (one of the greatest philosopher) while Socratic era is during the period where Socrates has gained relevant influence. Other scholars stated that Pre-Socratic is prior to the birth of Socrates while Socratic era is after his birth but during his philosophical expositions (Uduigwomen and Ozumba; 1995).

The Pre-Socratic era is the period where the philosophers focused on cosmological issues and termed as the ultimate stuff of the world. Issues then were to determine what actually the primary stuff of earth is. The philosophers under this era are as follows: Thales (624-546 BC); Anaximander (610 BC-546 BC); Anaximenes (585 BC-525 BC); Parmenides (515 BC-450 BC) etc. Socratic era is preoccupied by sophists' views and the era is known as the golden era. The philosophers here are as follows: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, etc (Ezeani and Ojih; 1999)

The modern philosophy was orchestrated as a moment for adept critical Evaluation in Philosophy and philosophical question. The Philosophy at this period concentrates on finding the major source of knowledge, nature and structure of the society and politics at large. The philosophers that took the stage during the modern period in the history of development of philosophy are as follows: Rene Descartes, Baruch Spinoza, Leibnitz, John Locke, etc. Between the Ancient and Modern period is the medieval period. The medieval period is characterized by the views of spiritual leaders where philosophy is used to justify religious belief. The philosophers under the medieval period are as follows: St. Augustine of Tagaste, St. Anselm, St Thomas Aquinas,

The contemporary period is synonymous with emergence of divergent schools of thought. This period is the period wherein we are. At any of these periods; there has been a relative problem which philosophy has attempted and succeeded or attempted but failed to succeed. Immanuel Kant, G. W. F. Hegel are examples of philosophers who served as the front-runners of this period (Okoro; 2007). Thus, this paper attempts to discuss the problems of philosophy, regardless of it being solved or not. These problems are as follows.

The Problem of Knowledge

Knowledge and belief are different from each other. It follows that one may have belief without having knowledge or vice versa. Take for instance, if one believes something without any reason to justify the belief and it turns out that the person is right by accident, the person merely has true belief; which is different from knowledge (Okoro; 2007).

Belief is not the same as having knowledge. Knowledge includes the psychological investigations into the becoming and essence of human knowledge and the critical study of its validity. Equally, human knowing in the total context of everything existing can be added to the above (ibid).

There are two aspects attached of knowledge: First, there are the questions: What is knowledge and what makes knowledge different from true belief? Second, there is the question: Given some clarification of what knowledge is, do humans ever have it? One position admits that humans may and do have true beliefs but do not know anything, including even the most obvious ones. This position is scepticism (Onyeocha; 2004).

The source of knowledge is that from which true and certain knowledge as is found in the judgment can be drawn. The source should mere condition of knowledge. With regard to truth, in a primary sense, the sources of knowledge are the objects themselves since the knowledge of truth is possible only through reflection on the act of knowing itself. In a derived sense, a source of knowledge is also everything in which the objects and the knowing subject, before he makes a definitive judgment are given (Uzoma; 1996).

Problem of Religion

The term Religion is gotten from a latin word relegere which means to read again. Thus, the word 'religion' means to turn oneself to something again and again, to consider something very carefully. Onyeocha observed that the object of such concern must merit such attention even to require it because of its own lofty excellence (Onyeocha; 2004).

Religion is concerned with the most sublime and man by embracing it strives to fulfill his moral obligation and attain perfection. In religion, man turns to the Supreme Being. It therefore embraces all the higher powers of the human soul. These powers include knowing, willing and feeling. In religion, one gives self and as such is a product of the will. Due to the fact that religion is spiritual in nature, it creates for itself visible expressions in words, behaviors and symbols (Gordon and Wilkinson; 2008).

Religion was man's understanding of how things work - (science), and explanation of method of controlling those force (technology). It was the earliest science and technology for man. Man thought that thunder was caused by big, powerful, invisible versions of themselves walking on the clouds. Men thought that they could propitiate these powerful agents and as such persuade them to be Through Sacrifice (ibid).

Problem of Existence of God

The main issue here is whether or not God exist. It follows that philosophy has to ask whether it is actual, whether it is present among those realities which are not merely possible or potential but which are here. In the history of mankind, people of different epochs conceive God as an actual being who is the supreme originator and ruler of the world and all that it contains. Some see the term God as a blanket-name for a number of super-human beings or invisible forces seen collectively as nature which control the universe. God is necessarily conceived as first and as supreme in both power and being (Gordon and Wilkinson; 2008).

In the existence of god, we. Do not talk of potential or possible existence but an actual existence. Furthermore, we do not speak of caused existence but of uncaused existence; not of contingent existence but of necessary existence; not of effected existence but of pure actuality.

It therefore follows that the term God means a being that is thought of as actual, one, first, supreme, the originator and the ruler of the universe. God is Being superior to this bodily world and all that it contains; a Being that has produced the world and is in-charge of it; a Being that has no other superior to it, who is supreme.

Proofs of the Existence of God

According to St. Thomas Aquinas, there are five traditional proofs- the *quinque viae* of the existence of God (Aja Nwachukwu; 2012).

Proof from Motion: idealized that if there is motion in the world, there is a mover and eventually, there is a First or original Mover who is Unmoved. Since the assumption above is in the affirmative, it follows that God exists. **Proof from the Order of Efficient Causes:** If there is a true order or connection of efficient causes, there ought to be a first cause, which is Uncaused. Now, there does exist, as it manifest all about us, a true order or connection of efficient causes. Therefore, there must be a first cause, which is Uncaused. And that First Cause, we call God. It follows that God exists.

Proof from the Contingency of Earthly Things: if contingent things exist, they demand as their ultimate explanation, a being which is necessary. Now, contingent things exist. Therefore, they demand as their ultimate explanation a Being which is 'Necessary. This Necessary Being we call God. Therefore God exists.

Proof from the Degrees of Perfection in Things: if there are, in things about us in this world, real degrees of more and less, then there must exist a most, a maximum, a greatest, not only in a relative sense as the greatest in a certain order, but in an absolute sense as boundlessly greatest. Now, as is manifest, there are real degrees of more or less in things about us in this world. Therefore, there exists a most, a maximum, a greatest, not only in a relative sense but in an absolute sense. This greatest we call God. Therefore God exists.

Proof from the Government of the World or Finality of Natural Things: if the world exhibits a most wonderful and constant order and design, and is an end, it has an intelligent designer and governor and ultimately, a First Designer and First Governor who can be no other than the First Necessary Being or God. Now, the world does exhibit a most wonderful and constant order and design and is directed in itself and in its parts to an end. Therefore, the world has an intelligent designer and governor and ultimately, a First Designer and First Governor who can be no other than the First Necessary being or God. Therefore God exists (Aquinas; 1969).

Many scholars accept these rational demonstrations in the sense of indications not as laboratory proofs of God's existence. It should be noted that the architecture of the truth of all realities hinge on the existence, nature and operation of God who exists. If God does not exist nothing else would exist and nothing would have meaning. That God exists is not a self-evident truth. It requires thought and inquiry. It is not present to the human mind. It is necessary to prove it because of the necessity of the human mind to be certain of that reality which explains all other reality fundamentally and fully (Aja Nwachukwu; 2012).

Being and Non-Being

It may be defined as what is or as that which exists, or simply as reality. In other words, it is whatever is, whatever exists, whatever has reality, entity or existence. It is posited in the universe or beyond it. Being is the subject of metaphysics and also the first thing grasped; by the human intellect - that is the first concept to be formed by the mind. If man knows anything at all, he knows being (Russel; 1974).

Being is indefinable because to define is to ascribe a specific difference, a quality that distinguishes the defined from other realities. But outside being there is no other reality. Being is the first, the most simple, universal and immediate of all notions. It is the first to be known and the most self-evident reality of the human intellect.

For Parmenides, being is, non-being is not. In all, being has one fundamental contrast: non-being. Whatever is not being is non-being. Being and non-being are exclusive, contradictory and negating subjects of speech. One can still speak of non-being as something. Being and not-being are exclusive of each other but not as non-being. For not-being means not-yet-being, not being here and now, not this-being. It can be being later or in another respect (Bittle, 1939).

Essence and Existence

Essence is that which is a reality or has true, actual being. It is that which we see and touch or know to be here or there or somewhere else according to Iroegbu. This reality is real due to the act of existing, its perfection. It is what makes a thing be in reality, be in itself in the existential universe.

According to (Bittle; 1939) in his text, *The Domain of Being*, existence is the state of being in virtue "of which a being is present as an actuality and not merely as a possibility distinct from the mind and if it be a produced being, distinct from its producing cause"

Essence on the other hand, is, that by which a thing is what it is. It is the definition of a thing. It is that which a thing is before it took concrete actual existence. It is the potency to being as (Iroegbu; 1995) said. In Plato, essence exists outside a thing. But in Aristotle, essence exists in the thing. According to (Iroegbu; 1995), Thomas Aquinas sees essence as 'that through which and in which, a being has its act of existing'. Fundamentally, essence is the thing which takes on existence. Existence is the essence put into reality.

Permanence and Change

In the history of philosophy, philosophers were faced with two basic features-the occurrence of natural change and the continuance of certain apparently permanent conditions, in other words the problem of permanence and change. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus was a proponent of change. Everything alters and changes, he insisted. One can never step twice into the same river since it does not remain the same. The only permanence was the principle of law of change. Everything in the cosmos was in flux. It came into being and it passed away (Wallace; 1977).

For Heraclitus, change is the very substance of variegated reality. Though there is reality, it is in continual process of becoming. In him, we note that things flow, proceed, evolve, progress, come and go, originate and disappear as an indubitable fact of change in our experiential world.

The Greek philosopher Parmenides made an analysis of what of the fixed, unchanging and unchangeable features of reality. For him, being is, non-being is not. Therefore becoming is illusion. It follows that a thing either is, or it is not. The fundamental reality of things is that they are. How things are, their being or to be is an object of thought. A thing is means a thing is real. If it is real as we admit, then it falls outside not-being or non-being. Hence being is opposed to non-being. It follows then that either a thing is or it is not. Either being or not-being (Onyeocha; 2004).

Change means something becoming what it was not. Can X become another thing eg. Y? Impossible says Parmenides. For X must always be X. To become Y would mean that X is no longer X but something else. The supposed: change or progression from X to Y is deceptive. It is an illusion. Change or becoming is an illusion and not a reality (Wallace; 1977).

Unity and Plurality

Omereg be (2003) observed that our senses perceive things as varied, distinct, contingent, individual, multiple and autonomous though related. I see this paper concretely here not paper as paper or paper in general. The intellect grasps unity in being, not this or that pen but pen as an instrument of or a being for writing. The basic contrast and apparent contradiction between our sense report on reality (as multiple) and the unity report made by the intellect (all is being), is the fundamental problem of the one and many. The problem is which experience is valid, true and certain: the sense report (of many) or the intellect's report (of one)?

Stump (1971) stated that Parmenides the Greek philosopher posited unity, being is one as against Heraclitus omnia flux (a continuity therefore plurality of becoming). Empedocles on his part was a pluralist who posited four elements - earth, air, fire and water as fundamental reality of the universe. Anaxagoras was monist in presenting the Nous (mind) as the fundamental reality.

In modern thought, empiricists like David Hume maintain that what the senses give us is real. In medieval thought, the emphasis is on the mental, the intellectual side of the experienced. For Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and in part Kant

both the sense and the intellect are powers of the same mind, the same person, the same one who sees and thinks. What they do is to present different perspectives of the same reality that is experienced. As such both aspects are complementary.

Substance and Accident

Aristotle, in his book *Metaphysics*, generally sees substance as that which persists when all attributes are removed. It is that to which all attributes or categories are predicated, itself not predicated of anything. Substance is the ultimate substratum, that to which to -all is predicated and which itself is not predicable of these other things. Aquinas (1969) postulates that substance is that to which it belongs to exist in itself and not in another. In other words, substance is a self-subsistent being and is the support of accidents. Accident is that to which it belongs to exist in another - which must be substance - and not in itself.

Wallace (1977) opined that an accident differs from a substance in that its complete definition requires the inclusion of the subject in which it exists. For him, accident and substance are distinguished by their differing capacities for different modes of existence while remaining interrelated as the dependent on the independent.

According to Iroegbu (1995); there are four categorization of substance which includes: substance as essence, substance as universal, substance as genus and substance as substrate. In this paper; we will limit ourselves to two of them only; which are:

Substance as Essence: Essence is the definition of a thing. It is what makes a thing what it is (was). The beingness of a thing is its reality. Thus while a thing is its definition, its definition is its reality, its substance. There is no total identity of essence and substance because essence is in itself the principle of that which structures the material in question into one whole. It gives the thing its presence and finality, e.g.: Man is man, not because of his size or weight but because of the rational animalist that constitutes his formal and material being.

Substance as Substrate: For Aristotle, this is the most basic - for that which underlies a thing primarily is considered to be in the truest sense its substance (*Metaphysics*). In Greek it is *Hypokeimenon*. It means the fundament, the underlying structure, subject or foundation of a thing. It is the *ji ihe*. It is what sustains a thing.

Causality

Plato thinks that everything that is, exists necessarily through something else. For Augustine everything that is, has sufficient reason for being. Immanuel Kant equally thinks that all change results through the principle of causality-cause and effect (Aja Nwachukwu; 2012).

For Aquinas, cause is that on which things depend either for their 'to be' or their becoming. It implies a dependence of one thing on another. In the view of Wallace (1969), a cause is that from which something else proceeds with dependence in being. Aristotle's four causes attempt to explain reality fullest. The formal cause determines precisely what a given thing is, it defines and identifies it. The material cause explains such by stating that out of which a thing is made. The efficient cause explains the origin of a thing by pointing to its maker. Finally, the final cause names the end, purpose, goal for which a thing is made (*ibid*).

Reality and Appearance

Experience and history show that at times what we consider to be real, true, fact or historical turn to be wrong. On a sun-bathed expressway, we at times see from a half kilometer distance a shiny stretch of water making us to slow down in

confusion about the source of the water on the road. On a sloppy quite corner one calls out and hears one's voice repeated at the other end-an echo. Our earth appears flat and so the entire humanity believed it to be for centuries until science proved to us recently that the earth is round. Till this moment when we look up it appears that sun rises and sets and thereby goes round out earth. In reality it this is not so (Bradley; 1946).

According to Plato, the world of our experience is not the real world. It is only an appearance world that has only participated imitational reality. The real world, for him, is the meta-empirical, non-sensible and ideal-world which is the world of forms. This world of forms is totally transcendental. All scientific knowledge that comes from the sense world is illusory and on Platonic understanding is only an appearance. Aristotle, on the other hand, sees the sensory world as real. Knowledge deals with reality. Errors do arise but our senses give us true knowledge on the basis of which life, communication and science are made possible, real and solid (ibid)

In between these two positions is realism that gives a balanced explanation of what there is in this world as authentically being without rejecting meta-empirical as such Iroegbu (1995). Mirage exists but all is not mirage. The invisible unchanging world exists. The visible and contingent world is equally real though contingent. There are appearance and reality. But appearance is not reality nor is reality appearance.

Universals

Universals according to Scholastics are universals -when a word is used predicatively, it does not apply only to the object of reference, and it applies generally to all objects to which such a predicate is applicable.

Universals can be understood in two senses: extensional and intentional senses.

In the extensional, it includes the totality of the things or class of things to which it can be applied. The intentional sense has to do with what a given predicate asserts or denies of a given object. This is to say through predicates meaning is given to an expression. It follows that the relation between words, object and meaning is semantic. For Aristotle, this relation can be univocal or equivocal. An expression is univocal, if the same expression stands in the same way that is, means the same for different objects. For example, the expression human being can be used in the same manner for several persons. In equivocal application, the same word assumes different meanings for different things. Example the word neat can be used for two different objects. Robanstore is neat and the man is neat. It does not imply that the Roman stores and the man in issue are of the same class.

Mind-Body Problem

It was Rene Descartes who stated that mind and body are antithetical to each other. Thus there is no real communication between the two. The mind is seen as a purely unextended entity distinct from the body. This position is dualism and dualists include Descartes, Leibniz and Malebranche (Bittle; 1963)

Body is that capable of being dounded by some shape and comprehended by some place and of occupying space in such a way that all other bodies are extended. According to him, the body is res extensa (an extended substance) and the mind as res cogitans (a thinking substance).

This interpretation is problematic on how to explain mind-body interaction in man. How do we account for the interaction between what is material and what is non-material? Some solutions proposed by the following theories are now to be highlighted (Anscombe and Peter; 1970):

Interactionism

Descartes maintains that body and mind interact at the pineal organ of the brain. Pineal gland may have been his solution due to the fact that it is the most inward part of the brain and because it is the only thing in the body without a double or counterpart. Descartes failed to explain how interaction between the body and mind takes place.

Occasionalism

This is the solution proposed by Malebranche. On the occasion of bodily stimuli or impressions, God creates the appropriate idea and response in the mind.

Pre-Established Harmony

Leibniz proposed this theory, according to which bodily and physical states have been pre-ordained by God to correspond at every point with appropriate mental states.

Double-Aspect Theory

Spinoza proposed this double aspect theory. It is his view that there is only one reality, unknown to us except through its attributes of mind and matter, two of the infinite number of aspects of this one reality.

M. Determinism

This is a difficulty for morality. A determinist claims that all things are causally conditioned such that they could not be otherwise. This implies the denial of freewill and thus the end of morality. Proponents would insist that morality presupposes free will and that ought to imply can. There would be no sense in praise, blame or talk of moral responsibility if one could not have done otherwise by choosing and acting freely.

The hard determinist believes not only that all things are determined but also that they are determined ultimately by purely external factors over which one has no control - circumstances of one's birth, upbringing, education, environment, genetic structure. Is there any comparison between hard determinism and morality? For hard determinists, the answer is both yes and no. Yes, the hard determinist decries murder, theft and torturing of starving children. The fact that people have no control over their actions, whether good or evil has no bearing on those actions being, nevertheless good or evil. The desire to torture starving children like cancer is evil to be recognized as such and to be dealt with. We do not punish cancer but instead try to treat or heal it (Onyeocha; 2004)

No, if morality implies the possibility of praise, blame and punishment then the hard determinist can scarcely accommodate morality. Certainly there is little room for praise, blame and punishment because no one is responsible for his or her condition in general and his or her moral condition in specific instances (Russel; 1974)

The issue of responsibility gave rise to the soft determinism. Soft determinism holds that because of antecedent causes our choices could not be otherwise. The soft determinist pays attention to the causes that lie within the individual. Our actions and choices are determined-by our desires, inclinations, attitudes or character. As such, the soft determinist sees determinism not only as compatible with morality but as necessary for morality. For they insist, your actions or choices can be judged moral or immoral or you can be held accountable for them only if they actually reflect your intentions, desires, attitudes and so on (Uzoma; 1996)

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