

**TOWARDS AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE OF THE MIND AND BODY
PROBLEM**

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**A PROJECT WORK SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this Project titled: “**TOWARDS AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE OF THE MIND AND BODY PROBLEM**” was carried out by **OGBEBOR PRINCE AARON** with matriculation number **ART2101123** in the Department of Philosophy; Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, under the supervision of:

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to God Almighty for His sustenance and protection throughout my stay in this institution.

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ABSTRACT

The mind-body problem, a central issue in philosophy, explores the relationship between mental phenomena and physical processes, traditionally framed within Western philosophical paradigms. This paper proposes an African perspective on the mind-body problem, drawing on indigenous African philosophical traditions, cosmologies, and epistemologies. Unlike the dualistic frameworks of Western philosophy, such as Descartes' mind-body dualism, African thought often emphasizes holism, interconnectedness, and communalism. Concepts from African philosophies, such as the Akan notion of okra (soul) and sunsum (spirit), or the Yoruba idea of ori (inner head), suggest a dynamic interplay between the material and immaterial aspects of human existence, rejecting strict dichotomies. This perspective integrates spiritual, social, and ecological dimensions, viewing the mind and body as inseparable from the community and the cosmos. By examining these African frameworks, this study challenges Western assumptions and offers a pluralistic approach to understanding consciousness, embodiment, and personhood. It argues for a contextualized philosophy that respects African intellectual traditions while contributing to global philosophical discourses on the mind-body relationship.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

One of the philosophical problems that have continued to bother human mind, and also brought about argument among philosophers is the problem of mind and body. Several solutions have been proposed to this mind and body problem in metaphysics and philosophy of mind, some of the proposed solutions according to Richard Taylor are interactionism, phenomenism, and other proposed solutions include pre-establish harmony, occasionalism, identity theory etc. However, none of these theories have been able to give an appropriate explanation on how the mind an immaterial substance relates with the body or material substance.

In metaphysics and western philosophy of mind the problem of the mind and body is a perennial one which have defiled several propose solutions, the problem of mind and body can be seen within the debate of two philosophical concept or schools of thoughts: materialism and idealism, accounting to David Stewart, H. G. Blocka, ‘Both materialism and idealism are extreme metaphysical positions, each tries to reduce the complexity and plurality of the world to a single kind of reality’; Stewart argue further that:

Most contemporary philosophers would tell you that neither materialism nor idealism by itself is an adequate metaphysical theory. Both have strong points but each has its fatal flaws, and an issue makes this more apparent than the mind and body problem.

From the above discussion, it becomes crystal clear that the mind and body dichotomy divert and led into several branches of view. Also there have been collected efforts at resolving the puzzles posed by the mind and body discourse within the African thought system. However this work adds to that body of knowledge and argues in line with Asa and J. Osweengie, that the Edo discourse on the human person could serve as an important tool for resolving some of the conceptual qualms and ontological commitment in the discourse of mind and body problem thus this Edo ontology of 'Omwan' should be seen as an alternative solution.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The problem of mind and body has defied several attempts at resolving it. This work focuses on what is the key argument proposed to resolving the mind and body problem, it attempts to answer such as what is mind and what is body? And what is the relationship between these two if they are different. Above all, what is the Edo concept of a person and how can this concept be used to resolve the mind and body problem in western metaphysics.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This work reopens discussion on the relationship between the mind and body, it attempts a solution from an African perspective. This work dissects and crystalised the mind and body problem as the relationship that exist between material and immaterial substance.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the different theories of mind and body problem and to identify their areas of strength and witness the other purpose of this study is to navigate a solution to the mind and body problem and it does this by projecting the Edo concept of *omwan* as an alternative solution.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This work covers the question of how the material body relate or affect the immaterial mind although the mind and body discourse pervades areas of metaphysical philosophy of mind and speculations. Psychologically this work only focuses on the relationship that exist between mind and body as initiated by Cartesian philosophy.

1.6 Methodology

This work adopts the method of hermeneutics in understanding the mind and body problem. Hermeneutics is the interpretation of texts. It entered philosophical discourse through the works of scholars like Gadamer and Heidegger and it enter African philosophical discourse courtesy of the work of scholars like Theophilus Okere.

Hermeneutics will enrich this work by dissecting the views of other scholars on the subject matter spotting act their pit force identifying gap in literature so as to enable us project Edo concept of *omwan* as a viable solution to the mind and body problem.

1.7 Literature Review

There have been so many views and counter views on the relationship between the mind and body in *The Passion of the Western Mind*, Richard Tarnas noted that Rene Descartes' dualism is only in man that the two realities come together as mind and body for him. In Descartes dualism the soul is understand as mind.¹

In an attempt to react to Descartes dualistic conception of man Wesley Osemwengie and Emmanuel Asia in their paper "the Edo concept of a person a Hermeneutical Approach" opined that the Edo conception of *Omwan* has both body and spirit. However for then, this does not constitute a water tight dualism as we have in Rene Descartes. Although for them the Edo notion of a human person could serve as an alternative explanation to the different theories of person in western metaphysics they however fail to show how this is possible.²

For Jim I. Unah the question is not whether the human person is compose of a mind or a body rather for him the question is which one of them is superior to the other he went

¹ R. Tarnas. *The Passion of the Western Mind*, New York: Harmony Books, 1991 p. 278

² W. T. Osemwegie and E. Asia, "The Bini Concept of a Person: A Hermeneutical Approach," in M. O. Akpa (ed.) *Contemporary Humanities*, Babcock University, Ogun State, Vol. 9, 2016, pp. 187

further to ask what are the attribute of the body and what are the attribute of the body and what are the attribute of the mind and that of these two attributes are different where then lies the relationship, his work is a brilliant attempt to review the different position of the various scholars on the mind and body problem, he failed to proffered a solution to the mind and body problem.³

For David Stewart, both materialism and idealism are extreme metaphysical positions. He further added that each tries to reduce the complexity and plurality of the world to a single kind of reality.⁴

Richard Taylor's *Metaphysics* wrestled with the issue of mind and body as it pertains to the human person. For him a person is a living physical body having a mind, the mind consisting however of nothing but a more or less continuous series of conscious or unconscious states and events.⁵

³ J.I. Unah, *Metaphysics, Phenomenology and African Philosophy* 1996 Hope Publishers: Ibadan, 1996, pp. 51-52.

⁴ D. Stewart and H. Blocker *Fundamentals of Philosophy* 3rd ed. New York, Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992, p. 161

⁵ R. Taylor, *Metaphysics*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1963, p.22

CHAPTER TWO

MIND AND BODY PROBLEM: AN OVERVIEW

2.1 What the Mind and Body Problem is

Plato made the first sharp distinction between mind and body. He claimed that the mind could exist both before and after its residence in the body. After him, other scholars made attempts to answer the question what is mind? Descartes gave us his mental – substance theory. Hume gave his own “Bundle” theory while William James propounded his stream of consciousness theory. The key question arising out of the mind and body dispute are does the mind and body exist at all? If yes, what is the relationship between the mind and body? Also, is there a valid distinction between the mind and body? It is generally believed that the mind and body are different entities and that they can survive the death of the body, based on this justification, people have classified events into mental and physical events. So also they have classified statements into physicalistic (I have an inquiry) and mentalistic (I feel bored) statements.

2.2 Materialism: Identity Theory

Over the centuries people have been made to believe that there is something called mind. But in the contemporary age, the identity theory which is a materialist and monistic theory allowed and this theory claimed that there was nothing like mind but only our

brain states or brain processes. It is important to note that the immense progress made by science and technology, gave room for the emergence of the identity theory.⁶

The identity theory is a materialist theory. Materialists claim that everything is matter or rather that all things are reducible to matter. J. Hospers defined “materialism” as the view that mental life is dependent upon physical conditions and cannot exist without it. The theorists who formulated this doctrine were the Australian materialists by norms of Armstrong, J.J.C. Smart, H. Fregel and U. T. place because of their monistic inclinations, the identity theorists believe that there is only one substance which is body.

The identity theory took its origin from “Behaviourism” which is the view that all things that are going in the mind can be known through observable behaviour for example the actions of people can give us an insight into what is going on in their minds. The psychologists who put forward this theory were J.B. Watson and B.F. Skinner. Their view was premised on their assertion that the mind is in principle unobservable.

Philosophically, this behaviourist doctrine is untenable because of the fact that observable behaviour can be deceptive at times for example when a person is pretending or lying. So that for instance, if my father wants to send me on an errand and I do not wish to go, I could pretend that I have a headache and no one would be able to ascertain whether I am truly ill or not. According to Terence Shaffer, the identity theorists present their doctrine

⁶ D. Stewart and H. Blocker *Fundamentals of Philosophy* 3rd ed. New York, Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992, p. 161

in two ways one is physiological that is to say they present their theory through the study of the structure and function of the human body (anatomy).

Secondly, they present their view empirically that is as an empirical account that is testable qualifiable. As earlier stated above, the theory claims that the mental states are quite literally identical to brain processes or brain states.

Thus J.J.C. Smart in his essay *Sensations and Brain Process* insists that sensations are not processes. He attempt to show that a sentence like “I have a pain” means something which makes it true to say that it is a report of a brain process.

H Feijl claimed that the identity theory simplifies our conception of the world because instead of concerning of two different types of events or entities, we have only one reality which is presented in two different concept systems. Another definition of materialism comes from J.J.C. Smart “... I mean the theory that there is nothing in the world over and above those entities which are postulated by physics thus, he denies that there are non-physical entities and non physical laws in the world.⁷

2.2.1 Critique / Objectives

So far, the doctrine and its claims have been under scrutiny and it is noteworthy to remark that this identity theory has some particularly good qualities.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 164

1. One of its great strength consists in the fact that it allows causal efficacy to mental occurrence. So that we are able to understand that pain for instance causes people to behave in a particular way for instance screaming or when we make specific decisions about something we are able to take the appropriate actions that go with the decisions.
2. It is now possible (through aid of scientific gadgets) to know that thinking which was attributed to the mind is more or less a brain process. Infact, the act of thinking can now be detected. Thinking can now be detected by machines. This particular point justifies their claim that mental events are brain processes or brain states.
3. The identity theorists adopt a scientific approach for an explanation of the nature of the mind, thus, according the age – long reference by philosophers, to the metaphysical explanations for the nature of mind and body.⁸
4. The identity theory removes for us the Cartesian problem of finding a location for mind in the human body. This is due to the concession that metal states are brain states and also because of the present – day Neuro-Physiological development so that we can now point to the location where mental states occur without any second thoughts that is to say in the brain.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 165

Just as there are positive sides to this identity theory, we also have a number of objections to it. But at the same time if we take into consideration our contemporary environment, it can be seen that the identity theory is a welcome substitute to dualism.

1. Critics have said that it is logically incoherent to identify mental states with brain states which is to say that it is not always the case that mental states lead to corresponding actions in their papers *Physicalism and Mind and Body* identity privacy and categories T. Nagel and R. Rorty respectively asserted that the identity theory escapes the charge of logical incoherence because, it explicitly explains the causal role of mental states in human behaviour. Therefore, (Nagel and Rorty) were obliged to prove that there are some mental states which lead to physical events.
2. Some critics have also said that it would make sense to ask where a neural event occurred in the body (even though it did not occur in a local place but in the whole nervous system) whereas it will make no sense to ask where the thought occurred in the body. It is therefore not the case that thoughts and neural events are identical because, two putatively different things can turn out to be one and the same only if they have the same location.
3. Again the theory cannot account for that essential feature of the mental which is the privileged position of the “subject” with respect to his own mental events. So that if the mental events were physical events then why should the subject be in a position to report their occurrence without having to mark or note the

observations, inferences that other people would have to make. So that the fact that mental events can be known implies that the mental events are not, and are different from physical events.⁹

In conclusion, therefore, even when confronted with the above criticisms and more, the proponents of the identity theory still maintain that it is a reasonable and plausible hypothesis. However, recent findings in show us that

Science is still unable to tell actually if one is in love. But really, all that the scientific gadgets can detect is that there are some very high emotions taking place in the person. However, the identity theory is not absolutely convincing in that, some of the local objections remain inadequately answered. The intelligibility of this doctrine is still in doubt. Thus, in essence, it is final approval and acceptability must partly wait for further scientific and psychological research.

Armstrong describes this above assertions as “The small black could on the horizon of a materialist theory of mind”. The above quotation is taken from his book.

A Materialist Theory of Mind

Having taken a look at the identity theory, it will be necessary to discuss some theories under dualism.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 163

2.3 Dualism

Interactionism, parallelism; pre-destined harmony occasionalism; epiphenomenalism are all aspects of dualism. Dualism is the view that claims the existed of mind and body that is to say they affirm that the mind and body exist. There are several dualist theories and the relationship between mind and body varies for instance some say it is parallel correlation while other claim that there is a causal connection between the mind / body.

2.3.1 Descartes Interactionism

Descartes was the first philosopher to develop a systematic theory of the native and interrelationship between the mind and body. For him, both mind and body are substances but with utterly different basic natures that is to say body is extended and unthinking while mind is thinking and unextended.¹⁰ He gave a unique gave a unique formulation of the mind and body problem. He defined a substance as nothing other than a thing existing in such a manner that is has no need for any other History in order to exist. Owing to his dualistic theory, he claimed that the relationship between the mind and body is interactionism which means that the body affects the mind and the mind affects the body. He said that the mind enivorossions from the brain at the pineal gland.

¹⁰ R. Taylor, *Metaphysics*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1963, p.22

Thus, the pineal gland is the point of interaction. Descartes pointed out that body is by nature always divisible while the mind is entirely indivisible.¹¹

He also said that the position of the mind cannot be located and that the mind is a mysterious entity. He claimed that the mind could survive the death of the body and is therefore more important than the body. He said that there is a causal connection between the mind on one hand and the body on the other hand. So that the physical events cause mental effects while mental events cause physical effects. Descartes talked about the “cogito Ergo Sum” which means “I think therefore I exist” he used this Cogito to argue for the existence of a thinking called the mind.

2.3.2 Critique / Objectives

In spite of the numerous criticisms on Descartes position, his position still agrees with what people normally believe to the relationship between mind and body.

The Cartesian position cannot actually tell us where or how the interaction between the mind and body occurs. This problem is partly due to the non-physical nature of the mind. Interactionism would force us to abandon the principle of conservation of matter and energy because physical energy would be lost when physical events produced mental effects and would be gained when mental produced physical effects or changes.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 23

According to an extract from the book *A Modern Introduction to Philosophy* by Edward and Pap, the conservation of energy principle asserts that every material system is either itself conservative or of not, is part of material system which is conservative.¹²

In objection to the conservation of energy principle, one could claim that it does not apply to the area of complex brain functions or phenomena or that the loss of energy is so negligible in relation to our means of detecting it. Therefore it is minor and can be ignored one could also hold to the conservation of energy principle but can deny that physical energy is gained or lost during interaction. And finally, some other critics have stressed the irrelevance of this principle to the problem of whether, and how, the mind and body interact.

In fact, the conservation of energy principle does not even explain what changes will happen or when they will happen. It just merely imposes a way general limiting conditions on the changes that are possible.

Another objection is that mind or mental states are so extremely different from body or bodily states that it is inconceivable that the two should be causally connected that is to say if we take mental states for what they are introspection and we take bodily states for what they are physical, then the dissimilarity between the two events cannot possibly allow or admit the existence of a causal relation between them.

¹² *Ibid.* p. 25

There is also this problem about other minds, there is no place for the mental causes in the explanation of human behaviour. Finally, a close look at the above objections to interactionism would reveal that there are both philosophical and scientific arguments against this Cartesian view.

This last criticism is an argument from the structure of the nervous system for instance we have purely reflex actions like sneezing and blinking in which the mind does not play any important role. It has been admitted that the mind has nothing to do with the causation of purely reflex actions.

2.4 Parallelist Theories

The parallelist theories also affirm the existence of body and mind. Thus, they are dualistic in nature. They deny any causal interaction between the mind and body for them, what usually exists between the body and mind is a correlation between mental events and physical events and also between physical events and mental events. It is significant to point out that all the other theories were postulated in such way as to avoid the problems of Cartesian interactionism. For example, if I break my hand and I feel pain, then according to the parallelists, the breaking of my hand did not cause pain that felt, but that the two actions that is to say the mental and physical happened simultaneously.

An objection to this view is that it cannot explain observed regularity for instance in the case of the pain, why is it that the breaking of a hand or leg will not cause joy occasionally instead of always causing pain if one breaks of hand.¹³

Two parallelist theories will be discussed here. They are

1. Occassionism theory
2. The pre-established harmony theory

2.5 Leibniz's Physico-psychoparallelism

Leibniz's view is based on his doctrine of monads. His position was a reaction to Descartes view. He claimed that monads are substances and that mind and body are both monads and are also substances. Monads are windowless entities that live by themselves and their existence has been harmoniously pre-established by God.¹⁴

The relationship between the monad is a parallel one that is to say that there is no causal connection between them. He claimed that this is the way that the mind and body react to another that is to say they behave in parallel fashion which has been pre-established by God to be so. So that there is a simultaneous reaction between the monads. He gave a

¹³ S.E. Stumpf, *Philosophy: History and Problems*, 2nd ed. New York: McGraw Hall Publishers, 1975, p. 167

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 168

clock analogy in order to explain the operation of the monads (mind and body). Taken two clocks for instance, one of the them is at Lagos and the other is at Kano when it is 3:30 pm on one of the clocks it is also 3:30 pm on the other for Leibniz, what caused the time to be the same on these two clocks was not because of a causal relation or connection but because these things just happened simultaneously that is to say in a parallel fashion. It is this way that the mind and body operate that is to say for example when your stomach aches, a frown comes to the face simultaneously. The objections of this view will be discussed in conjunction with those of occassionism.

2.6 Occasionism

The occasionalists hold that here is mind and body, but that every time there is a physical event, God now occasions a mental event and also anytime there is a mental event, God also occasions a physical event to go with it. they disagree with the notion of causal connection between the mental and physical and like versa. This theory was given by the Cattolec philosopher Malebranche and his counterpart Geulinux. For them, anytime there is a physical event, God will come and bring a mental event to correlate the physical event and the other way round.¹⁵

¹⁵ R. Tarnas. *The Passion of the Western Mind*, New York: Harmony Books,1991 p. 278

The occassionists theory is similar to pre-established harmony theory in that, they are both dualistic in nature and they postulate the theoretical entity (God) to explain an observed regularity of the correlation between the mental and physical events.

2.6.1 Objections

Both views postulate the existence of some unobservable entity called God in other to explain certain observed mind and body regularities. But Leibniz's theory is better than Malebranches theory in that God should not be used all the time to act in every case of regularity. Critics therefore claim that there should be a regulatory principle to act in time of correlation, instead of God always intervening all the time to achieve regularity.

Thus critics have claimed that Malebranche gives more work to God than is particularly required or necessary. It is therefore on these grounds that because there is no mind / body causal relation between the mental and physical, we had to explain the correlation between them in form of parallelism.

Another theory that holds the dualism of body and mind in epiphenomenalism, this view holds that there is a partial interaction between the body and mind but not between mind and body. It is therefore a one-way relationship in the sense that, the body produces mental event but mental event cannot produce physical events. For them, mental events can produce mental effects, physical events can produce physical effects and finally physical events can produce mental events. Thus, T.H. Huxley in his book method and results 1893 says that there is a causal interaction between the physical and the mental

but that mental events are always the effects of physical changes. Thus it can be seen that a mental events is merely an epiphenomenon on that can be referred to as by a product of certain material processes.¹⁶

This theory is attractive because of the fact that it avoids an emphatic and conclusive claim on mental processes and events which some people have referred to as “occult” entities. The theory proceeds from that which can be empirically verified to a less certain dimension on mental processes.

¹⁶ R. P. Wolf. *About Philosophy*, New York: Prentice Hall, 2000, p. 121

CHAPTER THREE

THE NOTION OF *OMWAN* IN EDO ONTOLOGY AS A PANACEA TO THE PROBLEM OF MIND AND BODY

3.1 Introduction

Given the inability of the above theories to resolve the mind and body problem, it is imperative we explore the Edo notion of a person and see how same can be explored and projected as an alternative solution to this vexing issue. Edo people live in the southern part of Nigeria and their philosophy is derivable from their worldview and linguistic identity. To understand the notion of *omwan* in Edo ontology, it will not be out of place to begin with the question; who is a person?

3.2 Who is a Person?

The biological constitution of a given entity as a certain criterion for being a person should not be considered. In order for an individual to be counted as a person; he/she must identify with the desires in a way that is indicative of him/her having free will (Harry Frankfurt). The person who acts as an agent has the ability to identify her desire which will allow her to effect and select the motivations which will move her to the action.

According to Frankfurt a person is one who has the ability to engage herself with her free will while deliberating about her motivations.¹⁷ Locke (1947) opine that a person a thinking being that has reason and reflection which consider itself as itself, at different and places time, the same thinking.

Mautner suggested that “personhood is an ultimate fact”. To proffer solution to the question “who is a person?” Some scholars in philosophy have paved into the mind and body problems, leaving them with a more difficult problem of explaining how body, a material substance could interact with the soul, a non material substances.¹⁸

In view of this double conception of a person and the reductions characterization of a person which are merely physical processes. The Edo knowledge reflects two groups which are Ontological and ethical ontologically, a person is a combination of a physical constituent, namely – the body and a set of two or three constituents of a rarefied character requiring careful examination. The non-physical constituents which account for the Edo personhood agrees with what might be called the life principle. This is an entity whose presence in the body means life and absence means death. The principle of life

¹⁷ Frankfurt, H. Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person”, *Journal of Philosophy*, 1971, p. 6

¹⁸ Mautner, Thomas. *The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*, London: Penguin Books, 2000, p.418

which the Akans calls Okra, while the Yorubas call it *emi* and the Edo sees as *agbon* why the opposite is usually called *Uwu* which means death.

According to Isiguzo, Ukagba and Otakpor, the human person in Igbo conceptualization is known as *mmadu* but the Edo sees it as *omwan*. The Edo posited that everybody cannot be regarded as *omwanagbon* which translate into “a person that has life”. *Omwanagbon* can simply be defined as a person or an individual substance of rational, communal and moral being.

3.3 Edo Ontology

In the Western conception of causality, we see a controversy over the concepts of determinism/freedom. However, (Asia) the Edo notion of causality is not mechanistic as we have in Western metaphysics. Perhaps, the conceptualization of *ehi*, reincarnation, determinism, freedom, predestination and destiny brings into question the notion of Edo ontology and uniformity of nature and how this ontology is the foundation for the doctrine of causality in Edo worldview. Ontology is the study of Being, existence, God, Man etc. Edo ontology is the science of Being or existence from the perspective of the Edos. This ontology which is also part of the Edo worldview is a unified system of whole. According to Asia in Edo ontology every being or existents are interconnected. Nothing exists on his own and anything that happens has a cause. The notion of *ehi*, *enikaro* etc are evidential of this deterministic but free cosmic system of the Edo.

The Edos believe that at death the person do not pass into extinction or oblivion but rather suffers death and continue to exist in other realms. This is the notion of the afterlife in the Edo understanding and the whole argument about the soul taking a new body is predicated on the Edo understanding of causality. Though there are several critiques of reincarnation but Godwin Azenabor has tried to settle this matter, when he said that we know somebody who has reincarnates as a result of their names (like Babatunde, Yetunde), bodily marks, memory transfer etc. we will not examine the possibility of reincarnation. Thus, according to Azenabor while the Edos preached the possibility of reincarnating fourteen times, the nature and manner in which one reincarnates is based on his previous existence. Thus, a man who has lived a moral life according to the dictate of the society and given a befitting burial will be ushered into the ancestral home. The cause of many people not entering the ancestral is as a result of their past life. Thus, they reincarnate to fulfill their mission in this world. Africans in general and Edo in particular, conceive the essence or nature of anything, as “force”. It will be incorrect to say that ‘being’ in the African thought has the necessary element or quality of force. The precision of their concept of being, Tempels said will not be attained if their notion of being is expressed, as “being is that which possesses force.”¹⁹ Rather, “the concept of force is inseparable from the definition of ‘being.’ What this paper is establishing here is that what drags event A to cause event B is the force, it is the force of being that makes A

¹⁹M. A. Izibili “Reincarnation “Iroso” in Esan: A Myth or Reality” in *Stud Tribes Tribals*, 6(2): 2008, pp. 105-109,

to cause B in Edo Ontology. Another issue here is the notion of ‘*enikaro*.’ The Edos believe that when a man dies at an old age and after such a man has been given a befitting burial he goes to join the ancestral train and from there he intercedes for his progeny who in turn prays to *Osanubua* through him. This dead person becomes *enikaro* or ancestors and they are responsible for the causes of some good deeds or evil deeds that befalls man in his daily life. Thus, they are also agents of causality.

The Edo notion of causality is also in keeping with their view of determinism, this is while C.S. Momoh in his article “Intra-Causality, Inter-Causality and Determinism” attempted to resolve the determinist notion of events within the framework of the libertarians which he attributed to the Auchi people of the defunct Bendel State.²⁰ In Edo experience of causality, every event is said to be connected and if this is the case it therefore follows that there is no room for chance. Everything that happens, happens for a reason and are determined to happen as such. This does not rule out the issue of freedom and responsibility because according to the Edos one’s action can still be right or wrong since one will account for his action and whatever happens to that person is as a result of his action. So, the case of soft determinism can be argued for the Edos. In Edo metaphysics if a bird cries at night and a baby dies in the morning, there is no problem with this because the bird killed the baby. But what is this connection between the cry of the bird and the death of the baby? Is this not a kind of a false cause: *post hoc ergo propter*

²⁰ C.S. Momoh, “Intra-Causality, Inter-Causality and Determinism” in *Second Order: An African Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. XI, Nos. 1 and 2, Jan. and July 1982, pp. 19-34.

hoc? Again, in Edo understanding, it is possible to throw a stone today, and the stone will kill a bird tomorrow. Thus, this deterministic view is not as watertight as we find in Western science or metaphysics and it is as a result of this deterministic nature of African ontology, that one phenomenon determines another that causation comes into play.

According to Iroegbu, the African notion of causality does not eliminate freedom but it explains it.²¹ One therefore is free to choose one course of action or another and even after the choice, he is able if he knows how, to manipulate the forces of nature, to utilize the good spirit's aid, to implore the assistance of his ancestors and to work out in consort with fellow humans in the community, the path of the good and progress that will merit him a crown: human and ancestral.²²

The notion of causality brings to the limelight the Edo notion of morality, religiousity and explanation of the ways things are. Since every cause are connected to their effects, to have good effects, that is for good event or things to happen to somebody, then he must be moral in his actions as he will reap what he sows. At the end, since the notion of causality gives no room for chance because it is strictly deterministic, that is given the cause, the effect is thereby determined and that given the effect the cause is thereby determine. How then can we account for the freedom of man in the Edo world-view? The freedom of man is anchored on the fact of man's morality. That is to say, we are moral if

²¹P. Iroegbu, *Metaphysics: The Kpim of Philosophy*, Owerri: International Universities Press, 1995, pp. 364-387

²² P. Iroegbu, *Metaphysics: The Kpim of Philosophy*, pp. 364-387

we conform to the dictates of the society in which we belong, this is to say that we can choose either to conform or to rebel. Thus one has the choice to choose and when one chooses then we are responsible for the consequences of our action. This all sounds like the existentialist notion of freedom, however this is no problem as it has been shown by D. Jung that methodology commensurability between the West, East and Africa is possible.

3.4 *Omwan* in the Edo Ontology: An Alternative Solution to the Mind and Body Problem

The word “personhood” or being a person is viewed in many African languages and societies as an acquired status that is based on a person’s relationship to their immediate community. The status of an entity can be determined by the community or society in which one belongs. The conception of a person in Edo is not just an individual of human parentage. To get to the state of a person, an individual must have attained a certain level of degree of moral maturity and social responsibility. On the other hand, to be regarded as *omwanagbon* in Edo, the person must have lived according to the dictates of the community in which he belongs. The Edo people are said to be socialistic and a perfect example of Mbiti’s thesis that “I am, because we are, and since we are, therefore, I am”²³

²³ Mbiti, John. *African Religions and Philosophy*. London: Heinemann, 1969, p. 180.

African communalism is not in any way to imply the denial of recognition of individual human being.²⁴ African communalism takes cognisance of ontological pluralism; and to assert, as Mbiti does, that we are, presumes prior recognition of the individuality of those making up the We. The independent of the individual is limited in the Edo knowledge of the human person. *Omwa* has the responsibility to act as he wills and he is also responsible for his action and therefore be guided according to the prescription of the community which he belongs. For one to be called *Omwan* in Edo community, one must have lived to a certain age, marry and give birth and according to traditional Edo society marriage is a family affair. *Omwan* does not live in isolation and his life is a life of interrelatedness and this does not perceive others as brothers and his own existence depends on the existence of the other. The freedom of the Edo person is limited within the confines of the creator which is known as *ehi* that is to say destiny. The word *ara ria gbon, da dae ehi aze* meaning – when we came into this world, we all chose a different destiny. It means therefore that our actions must be directed towards achieving this goals and objective. In time of lack of knowledge, the gods are consulted through cast lot which is also known as *iha*. During this process, the *ehi* of the person involve is seen and revealed in the process. Chinua Achebe capture the Edo understanding of *ehi* when he wrote on Igbo concept of *Chi* (guardian angel or spirit double) which is the

²⁴ D. Kaphagawan, 1998: 173

complementing aspect of a person thereby saying that nothing can stand alone without another thing standing beside it.²⁵

Basically, Achebe itemize two types of Chi which are the good and bad unlike Edo which have one type of *ehi* which is the good *ehi* but in a situation where things are not working in his favour, such a person's *ehi* is said to have departed from him. The Edo believe that a man success depends on his *ehi* which can be extracted from a such statement as *ehi wen do su wen la agbonna* which means my other self come and accompany me through this life or world.

Osemwengie and Asia correctly avers that *agbon* is a journey and we all are on a journey. The world is a market place and everyone must embark on the journey back home. (Osemw and Asia) *Omwanagbon* on the notion of Edo does not include children because a child is not yet a person, not having reached the time of the requisite maturity in moral thinking and social action. The issue of personhood in Edo is not something one is born with. It something one must labour for and one can fail if not been careful. There exist a degrees of personhood and its lower graduations can shade-off into non-existence in the life of an individual. Based on African conception, is a struggle for personhood, the

²⁵ Achebe, Chiuna. :*Chi in Igbo Cosmology*” reprinted in *African Philosophy an Anthology* edited by Eze, Emmanuel Chukwudi. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1998, p.67.

question one might ask is – what account for this conception among the Edo people? The answer is simple. The Edo society is famously communalistic.²⁶

In the Edo conception of a person, the individual is brought up from the beginning with a sense of belonging and solidarity with a circle of kinship. The solidarity is a system of reciprocity where individuals have obligations to a large set of other individual. Therefore, personhood is culturally defined as the attainment of personhood fully embedded in a cultural community which determines the personhood of its members. The society provide man answers to difficult questions such as: what am i? What is the purpose of life? Why do people suffer? What is happiness? What is death? The removal of a baby's placenta from the mother's womb does not make the baby to be free but rather it is symbolize.²⁷

The perspective of Edo on reincarnation is a watershed on the nature of personal identity, how can we conclude that a child that is just born is a reincarnation of the man who died some days ago, the identity of a person is certification by virtue of recalling things that happened in the past.²⁸ *Uwu nogiewan evhinmwon* (death that sends one to the great

²⁶ Osemwegie, T. W. and Asia, E. (2016), "The Bini Concept of a Person: A Hermeneutical Approach," in M. O. Akpa (ed.) *Contemporary Humanities*, Babcock University, Ogun State, Vol. 9, pp. 185-195.

²⁷ Okot, p'Bitek. "The Sociality of Self" reprinted in *African Philosophy an Anthology* edited by Eze, Emmanuel Chukwudi. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1998, p.74.

²⁸ Coetzee, P.H. and Roux, A.P.J. (ed.) *The African Philosophy Reader*, London: Routledge, 1998, p.169

beyond), normally this kind of death does not normally happen to children, instead more euphemistically, children are said to *Ofiya*, this means that the child has died but will be reborn. According to the Edo ontology a child who has not achieved his or her cycle of life will come back to life to achieve his or her purpose in life. The belief of the Edo people is a clear assertion that the death of a person is not final.

Osemwegie and Asia also noted that the belief of the Edo about what makes a person is the ability to possess both body and spirit. This two aspects of the human person is not watertight as the Edo could explain the problems of mind and body issues in the Edo concept of a person there are organs that can perform the role of physical and mental aspect of a person which are *Erere* (brain), *Ikokodu* (heart), *Ebie* (Intestine) which are all part of *Egbe* (body) a mental entity, have a mental and psychic functions to perform. The Edo sees a person as one who has an integrated physic-chemical system whose conscious activities are output of his or her consistent interaction between its various elements or subsystems²⁹.

The concept of a person cannot be emphasized in the various ways we examined certain theories of mind such as Cartesian dualism functionalism, behaviourism etc.³⁰ The translation of mind as *ikokodu* (heart) or *eho* (life giving entity) in the Edo language does

²⁹ Idoniboye, D.E. "The Concept of 'Spirit' an African Metaphysics", in *Second Order: an African Journal of Philosophy*, vol. II, No. I, 1973, pp. 79-88.

³⁰ Isiguzo, Andrew I., Ukagba, George and Otakpor, Nkeonye. "The Igbo Concept of a Person" e *POriente*, Anno 59, No. 2 (Giugno 2004), pp. 231-243 published by: Istituto Italiana per l'Africa e l'Oriente (IsIAO) Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4076140>

not help in determining the issue as it illustrate the existence of uncertainty in the translations, the question that usually arises in reconciling the mind (spirit) which is truly immaterial with the body (*egbe*) which on the other hand purely material do not spring in the Edo concept of a person.

In the Edo notion of a person, there is a component of central state materialism that attributes mental activities to some organs that form *Egbe* (body), the Edo are not clearly materialists because of the postulation of *eho* (life giving entity) as the majorly basis of life. In the Edo ontology to be considered as a person, one must be able to possess some criteria which include, the individual must posses a sense of freedom, this freedom is distinguished from the fact that he has life which he must like according to his *Ehi* (destiny). Secondly, for an individual to be regarded as *omwanagbon* he must be impartial, this means he should not be too emotional in his thought. If such individual fails to meet this condition such as individual is addressed with such statement as '*aima bioo* and *uwu omwanagbon*' ("you were not born" and "you are not a person" respectively).

CHAPTER FOUR

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

4.1 Evaluation

The importance of the Edo notion of *owman* cannot be overemphasized. Perhaps, Many thinkers and investigators, particularly those not trained in philosophy, have been diligent to maintain that human beings or persons are physical objects having, of course, psychological power and attributes which determine them from other kinds of physical objects, but that such psychological powers and attributes can be comprehend in terms of certain bodily functions. Some views amount to some version of epiphenomenalism, according to which mental entities, such as thoughts, images, ideas, and feelings, never enter as causes into any physical processes, particularly those within the nervous system.¹

Mind and body do not, on this view interact, for no mental state or event ever causes any bodily one. The body does act upon the mind in this sense, that some, if not all psychological states or events are the direct or indirect effects of occurrences within the body.²

We should ask ourselves the questions what a person is, the answer appears like this – A person is a living physical body having a mind consisting of nothing but more or less continuous series of consciousness or unconsciousness states and events such as feelings, images, and thought which are the effects but never the courses of bodily activities such as view.

All bodily processes are self contained, that means non bodily state or event ever enters causally into any physical process, all bodily behaviour is caused by bodily processes alone. Then the mind and all states and events transpiring therein, as human behaviour is concerned whether those mental states and events exist or not, that human behaviour would be just what it is without them, since they in no way influence the direction or outcome of any state, process, or motion of the body.³

But this seems quite impossible to believe. We can, no doubt, suppose that that behaviour of certain organisms such as plants and insects is nothing but the resultant of physical or chemical processes within them, and is entirely without conscious direction, but it is impossible to believe that a man's thoughts and idea have not influence upon what he does. One can hardly suppose that a man's behaviour would be no different even if his mental life were quite different or even nonexistent, or that even the whole of human history, with all its wars and political upheavals, would have been just what it has been even without all those thoughts and feelings which, on this theory, superfluously attended them. What a man does is something quite obviously the more or less directs outcome of what he thinks, desire, plans, and intends. Some allegedly mental state, such as twinges of pain and the like, may indeed be the mere accompaniments and effect of bodily processes, having themselves no direct influence of bodily behaviour, but it is difficult to be.

Moreover, the watertight distinction between the mind and body in Cartesian *cogito* which led him to solipsism is quite absent in Edo discourse of man. In short, the

relationship between mind and body in Edo ontology is synonymous to the way a current flow through a wire that is why the body can reacts to the thoughts in the mind.

4.2 Conclusion

The relationship between the mind and the body which is a major problem in Western philosophy of mind and metaphysics is absent in Edo notion of a person. This is so because the dualist categorization of the human person in Western philosophy is alien to the Edo people. As seen in the discussions above, the Edo people conceived the human person as a one but with different aspects.

The idea that the Western conception of a person has different theoretical name such as occasionalism, epiphenomenalism, dualism, monism, parallelism etc poses the question what theoretical name are we to call the Edo resolution of a the interactionism between the mind and the body. The different theoretical name of the relationship between the mind and the body in Western philosophy is borne out of the fact that it is an individual opinion or reflection, the Edo notion of a person though very similar to the materialist or identity theory but it is not a product of an individual reflection, rather a collective philosophy of Edo people.⁴ Hence, it should be called “The Notion of *Omwan* in Edo Ontology: a Panacea to the Mind and Body Problem.”

It is very imperative and pertinent for us to say at this junction that the Edo notion of a omwan should be further research into and use to resolve the problem of mind and body in Western which have defied several attempts at resolving it. Hence, an alternative

solution to this vexing problem should be sought within the unique and novel interpretation of *omwan* in Edo ontology.

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