

Rethinking Thinking and Knowing from a African Perspective: Towards an Epistemology of Intermediality

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Introduction

Theoretical evaluation of the possibility, extent and accuracy of human knowledge, which originates from and forms the primary focus of philosophical epistemology, also constitute the core of the debates in many other disciplines. That suggests the prime place of philosophical epistemology in the academic space. As an intellectual discipline, epistemology presents itself as an engine room to examine the extent of human knowledge within the purview of its own theoretical horizon and also to identify and to possibly handle sceptical objections to the possibility of human knowledge in all other fields of intellectual endeavours. Unfortunately, the question of how we go about acquiring and maintaining knowledge, which forms part of the nucleus of epistemology still has countless aspects begging for further investigations (Georg Brun and Dominique Kuenzle (forthcoming). The focus of this paper does not pretend to provide any final answer to any or all of the numerous grey areas of epistemology begging for scholarly attention. It does not intend to carry out any empirical research regarding the process of knowing or on what factors contribute or intervene in the act of knowing. Rather, it attempts only to expose the weaknesses of some previously given explanations of the process of knowing or acquiring knowledge, and identify some dynamisms involved in the process, with an ultimate interest to attract intellectual in theoretical philosophy to the emerging debates on intermediality.

The question of human knowledge has been discussed in various dimensions such as “what is knowledge?” “Where does knowledge come from?” “What are the bases for knowledge claims?” “How do we know?” and “When do we know?” “To what extent can we claim to know, and on what basis?” and “what is the relationship (if any) between knowledge and related concepts such as belief, perception, intuition, emotion and testimony?” Although it is virtually impossible to discuss an aspect of knowledge in epistemology without any touch on other aspects, this paper will be concerned mostly with explaining what it takes to know or what processes are involved in knowing. That is, the discussion in this paper will revolve round the question of the

processes and epistemological events involved in the act of knowing. Rather than attempting to carry out any empirical demonstration, this discussion takes the rationalism-empiricism divide as the point of departure. Ultimately, it hopes to complement the existing literature in philosophical epistemology and at the same time advocating a review of the existing theoretical positions that do not countenance with the influence that modern intermedial innovation could have on the process of knowing in philosophical epistemology.

It should be noted that the rest of this paper is not to describe any experiment on how any particular media generates knowledge or how knowledge could have been impossible without the new media technologies, let alone to argue that intermediality which describe the interconnectivity between various media could form a foundational basis for certainty. Rather, I am interested in analysing the very concept of intermediality as an emerging and unique interaction (inter) between the different ways people communicate with others, such as newspapers, television, radio, and the Internet authorship (media). It represents what happens when traditionally ascribed, ontologically separate forms of arts and a variety of different media meet, merge and synergise interdependently into the territory of one another (Chapple, 2008: 7-14). The ultimate objective is to support the need for a review of positions in traditional philosophical epistemology. It is also noteworthy that there is currently a bold lack of attention to the emerging concept and subfield of intermediality from theoretical philosophy. Only a few (if any in the strict sense of it) known scholars have offered theoretical analysis on the issue from the point of view of both theoretical and practical academic philosophy. If therefore the function of philosophy is to offer competing theories and explanations or it is to make a critique of existing theories and explanations of scholars and experts from other fields, the dearth of intellectual materials, theories and analyses from philosophy scholars at this moment clearly represents an omission or neglect to which this paper serves to invite scholarly attention accordingly. As Shaffer and Clinton (1999: 283–300) couch it

...technological shift has changed our understanding of thinking. The field of cognitive science was based on the advent of computers, when theorists such as Newell and Simon (1956, 1972) and Anderson (1980, 1993) described human cognitive activity in terms of computational processes (see also Pinker, 1997). These models challenged the behaviorist paradigm by providing testable assertions about otherwise implicit cognitive activity within the mind of an individual. More recently, sociocultural theories—including activity theory (Engeström, 1999; Tikhomirov, 1999), mediational means (Wertsch, 1998) and distributed cognition (Hutchins, 1995; Norman, 1993; Pea, 1993)—have argued that mind does not exist solely within an individual but arises in activity. Intelligence, these theories suggest, is an attribute of a system involving multiple individuals and the tools they use in a larger social context.

Postman, Neil (xxxx: 22-24) corroborates the argument of Shaffer and Clinton Shaffer and Clinton. He posits that:

truth does not, and never has, come unadorned. It must appear in its proper clothing or it is not acknowledged.... As a culture moves forward from orality to writing to printing to televising, its ideas of truth move with it...we might add that every epistemology is the epistemology of a stage of media development. Truth, like time itself, is a product of a conversation man has with himself about and through the techniques...he has invented.

Given the enormity of the issues involved in social and technological change, scholars in philosophical epistemology stand no chance of being relevant while ignoring or remaining indifferent against the current of theoretical vibrancy in other fields.

The popular stories in epistemology have been in two dimensions. One proposes that we acquire knowledge through the senses alone: we call this, the empiricist school of thought. The other, casting grave doubt on the reliability and even on the possibility of acquiring knowledge through the senses, argues that we acquire knowledge through reason alone. The latter school of thought is named the rationalist school. In various fashions, scholars have traditionally been divided between these two seemingly opposing schools of thought, with some taking a somewhat mid-courses and others opting for eclecticism.

Although, there is now a shift from understanding epistemology as a theory of justification than as a theory of knowledge that it used to be known (compare Hamlyn, 1977 and Kazeem, 2009: 52-58), the best way to react to traditional divides in philosophical epistemology is to identify the gulf in a manner that support the rationale of the intended objection. To do so in this paper, it is reasonable considering the possibility of non-professional philosophy reader to begin with re-examining some of the basic assumptions of rationalism (Bonjour, 2011: 283-293, 1998) and its empiricist (see Chisholm, 1978: 347-354, 1972) opponent. In sum, rationalism in its classical formulation represents the belief that we can attain knowledge at its very best only through reason. Empiricism is the direct opposite of rationalism which holds that there can be no perfect knowledge and that the best we can attain is the putative knowledge through the senses.

Specifically, the paper argued that since two people cannot have the same present experience, and that even if they do, they still cannot derive the same meaning, it implies that knowledge acquisition goes beyond reason or experience or mere combination of both to a more complex structure unexplored by scholars in the rationalist/empiricist divide traditional epistemology.

If knowledge were to derive in practice from reason alone, it probably could have been possible for two more persons to have the exactly the same present knowledge, by merely reasoning the same way either logically or otherwise. On the other hand, if it were also the case that experience alone determines knowledge, perhaps two different people may coincide at a point of exact experience. If either or both

experience alone and reason alone is true, the probability of sameness in knowledge is by implication assured. If false, then, there is more to knowing than the two scholarly divides have shown or are logically capable of showing.

The selection of rationalism and empiricism for the purpose of this paper does not generate from an ignorance of other theoretical positions such as or/and other than pragmatism and phenomenology. The objective of the paper is to show that whenever we claim to know, there are more intervening factors (referred to collectively as media) than scholars had previously accepted, using the examples of the core divides in traditional epistemology. In carrying out the promises of the paper, it employs a historio-critical multi-disciplinary approach that makes it acceptable and reader-friendly to scholars in philosophy other disciplines without compromising its disciplinary rigour.

Knowledge, Knowing and Intermedia Semiosis

In this part, we shall concern ourselves with arguments supporting numerous ways of knowing including those previously accepted in traditional epistemology with an ultimate to show that the process of knowing and factors involved in the process are more multiple than the traditional epistemology has acknowledged, and therefore advocating further research in philosophical epistemology and in every other fields, to re-examine the popular beliefs on how we humans do acquire knowledge. It is likely the case that doing so will offer a new wide horizon in epistemology and its methods of analysis in a fast changing world.

The nature of knowledge determines the process of acquiring it and the process through which knowledge is acquired also determines the nature of what knowledge could be acquired. Generally it is assumed that there are various kinds of knowing such as knowing how, knowing when, knowing that, knowing about, knowing what or knowing why; though acquaintance, inference or description. In dealing with all the different forms of knowing and knowledge we find out we deal with a wide scope of factors, media and things. These includes a huge number and variety of objects, physiological states, human and artificial devices, moods or factors such as tables, concepts, thoughts, imaginations, propositions, memories, expectations, artworks, spirits, perceptual and extra-perceptual entities, physical and metaphysical entities, properties, facts, states of affair, vocal and non-vocal, visual and non-visual entities and so on.

Reason and Experience: In spite of the complexities involved when considered from the point of view of things towards which human knowledge could be directed, philosophers generally have acknowledged the possibility of knowing through reason (rationalism), experience (empiricism), emotion and will (existentialism) and intuition (phenomenology) at least. Averagely, scholars have defended the possibility of knowing through reason and some have argued that we can know through reason alone. Scholars have equally defended the position that it is possible to know through the senses, while others insist that knowledge comes through the senses alone. However, the problem arises when the truth of one position necessarily implies the

falsity of the other. Traditionally, empiricists of the Lockean tradition believes that the physical objects affect the senses, while classical rationalism suggests that reason alone determines what could be known and the extent to which we can know. In these ideal senses, the truth of one position necessarily negates the possibility of the other position being true, as it is the case with all traditional positions in their classical or ideal senses. Give the numerous objections to knowing through reason alone, or through reason especially or through sense experience alone or through sense experience especially, an eclectic option becomes enticing as a theoretical solution to the divides. Eclectic position in this sense is a mere naive combination of the varying theoretical positions.

Synergic Option: Unfortunately, there is nothing in the eclectic option to suggest that it portends a superior viability as a theoretical alternative to either of the former divides. It is utterly challenged by logic because, on the one hand, it would be impossible in the first place to combine reason alone and sense experience alone. On the other hand, the truth of one necessarily negates the truth of the other. The choice of one necessarily excludes the other. The option of combining both is completely ruled out, so also the possibility of bypassing the weaknesses of each. That is, perhaps, it would have been possible in some way to avoid all the weaknesses and objections raised against either of the positions (rationalism and empiricism) if it were possible to combine both, but that alternative route is also ruled out.

An alternative route is to drop the “alone” which mutually demarcate the two alternatives irreconcilably. If we eliminate the “alone” qualification from reason alone and sense alone, the result would be that knowledge could be attained through reason and the senses or reason especially and sense experience especially. As attractive as that option appears, many scholars have begun since Heidegger and Sartre to consider human emotion or/and intuition rather than reason and/or sense experience as the main source of human knowledge. According to Georg Brun and Dominique Kuenzle (forthcoming)

even though emotions are often part of processes of knowledge production, they did not immediately attract the externalists' attention. It was largely assumed that the function of the justification condition, whether spelt out in internalist or externalist terms, is to rule out beliefs that are merely accidentally true. Consequently, only those features of belief-forming processes that systematically contribute to the truth of their products were seen as normatively, and hence epistemologically, relevant. Insofar as emotions seem particularly fallible, they do not seem epistemologically relevant.

Scholars also initially distinguish between reason and emotion based on their thinking that emotion involves normative judgements and decisions, which in their view are irrational.

Contrastivity: Generally, a situation of knowledge claim presupposes a discovery of a binary sort. For instance, p knows that q (e. g. Zorgia (p) knows that Spagnolo is in the

kitchen (q) or if p therefore q (if Hilary Clinton becomes the president of America (p) Nigerians will suffer (q) usually symbolised as $p \ddot{e} q$) (Kvanvig 2011: 25-36). Since F. Dretske (1972: 411-37) however, scholars in various fields have come at least to realise that knowing as an epistemic phenomena does not involve binary relations alone. Following the argument of Dretske, when a man sees an animal in zoo, and based on experience he knows (justified in believing) that it is a zebra. He does not merely believe that it is a zebra, rather, his belief that it is a zebra is such that he is also justified in believing that it is not a bull, or limousine or an angel or a boxer, because his experience rules out the possibility it is any of those alternatives. Jonathan Schaffer (2004:73-103), Antti Karjalainen, and Adam Morton (2003 74–89), Bredo Johnsen (2001: 385–406), Bas Van Fraassen, (1980) and even Christopher Read Hitchcock (1996) have adopted and at different times developed this contrastivist position initiated by Dretske. Morton specifically defends the statement that “...knows that p rather than that q ” is more informative and has advantages over simple “...knows that p .” According to Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (2008:257-270), contrastivists generally holds that all claims of reasons are relative to contrast classes. He further holds that the contrastive approach is relevant not only in the field of epistemology but also in various other fields involved in investigating human knowledge. He sees contrastivism as a movement comparable with others such as existentialism. The merit of Sinnott-Armstrong’s position notwithstanding, contrastivists believe that when we claim to know in such a binary statement relation as p knows that q , it should rather have been p knows that q rather than s in order to clearly specify the extent and perspectives of the knowing.

Going a little further, Morton (2003: 74) says:

A person can have a belief that involves the combination of several items of information. Sylvia might believe that the man in front of her is drunk. This combines three pieces of information: that (someone) it is in front of her, that it is a man, and that it is drunk (emphasis mine).

Morton is right to claim that knowing or believing involves several bits of information even though the observer or claimant might be unaware of the full implication his position being correct.

Ignorance: In an African dimension, it is of interest to note that in *Ifa*; one of the African mediums of knowing popular in Yoruba, Brazil and the Latin America generally, Orunmila is reported to have taught that *Ona sisi nii mu ni mo ona* (Karenga, 1999: 254). That is, “it is through missing the way that we come to know the way.” By implication, even opposites and negations (via negationis) have their positive epistemic qualities and relevance.

The logical implication of the foregoing is that in the process of knowing, both reason and experience could be necessary and complementary. In fact, some scholars have in recent time defended positions close to arguing that rationality and intentionality are equally involved in emotion as in any other systems and processes of cognition (Sousa, 2002: 247–63, 2004: 61–75, Kenny, 2003, Rorty, 2004: 269–78). Traditionally,

epistemologists look askance of emotion and hold it in disdain as privation of knowledge. These notwithstanding, as long as emotion possibly contribute to the process of knowledge production, it could be virtually impossible to clearly distinguish between situations where it has contributed from those in which it has not in any way influence a belief.

Belief: Furthermore, according to Peter Murphy (2013), a person inferentially knows a conclusion only if he knows and believes each of the claims from which the conclusion is essentially inferred. At least one cannot claim to know that p without first believing that p . For instance, a person cannot claim to know that a lionphant exists when she/he actually believes that it is false that lionphant exists. Otherwise, the knowledge claim from an unbelieved inference cannot be taken seriously (Murphy, 2013:311–317). By implication, each of the claims from which the present conclusion is inferred is a conclusion also previously or concurrently inferred. The implication is that the knowledge of the claims from which they were also inferred are also necessary. The chain of claims, inferences and conclusions required to infer any present conclusion suggests two possibilities.

Memory and its Re-evaluation: On the one hand, knowledge of every claim other than the present inference can be treated as past events, which affect the present event as memory would. That is, the present inferential knowledge builds on previously acquired bits of knowledge in order of succession. For instance, my claim that if rain falls then grass will grow is inferred from my previous experience of rain falling and grass growing. It is also built on my knowledge of things call rain, grass, growth and falling at least. It means that my claim to know that if rain falls grass will grow is founded on my previous knowledge.

On the other hand, it also implies that the explanation that the present inference is built on past experiences and previously inferred conclusions is over simplistic. Whenever we want to infer certain conclusion, and the present conclusion is to be based on our previous conclusions, the rational thing to do is to actually re-evaluate the previously inferred conclusion before inferring the new one. For instance, if you have previously inferred from other inferences that all soldiers are corrupt, and you have also inferred that Babangida is a soldier. To infer logically that Babangida is corrupt, it is reasonable to re-evaluate the previously inferred conclusions in order to ensure that one is making the right claim. That is, you should ask yourself: are all soldiers actually or still corrupt now, and am I still sure that Babangida is a soldier? Implicitly and perhaps unconsciously we re-evaluate previous experiences and conclusions to establish all new ideas.

Human Will and Decision Making: It is also arguable that we can never know what we do not know, because whatever we do not know remains unknown to us, and we know that we know only when we are aware of our knowledge of a thing. Consequently, we may neither consciously choose to know nor not to know what we do not know that we know not. This situation notwithstanding, in the process of crossing from ignorance to knowledge (whenever possible) about anything involves some forms of decisions.

From the foregoing analyses in addition to the advice from Dretske, Schaffer and Murphy, the process of knowing presents a very complex and descriptively elusive process.

In another sense however, the human will cannot be denied as part of the contributing factors in the process of knowing if humans are to be justifiably held responsible for their actions. The inability to hold the human actor responsible for his/her actions is one of the main illogicality that has plagued the ethically inclined epistemologies of Leibniz and Spinoza no less than those of the empiricist tradition. There is no empirical apparatus or otherwise to determine whether humans are responsible for their actions or not. However, it is logical to assume that the only way by which a person may be praised or blamed for his/her actions is to have determined the actions. That is, for instance, the only way praise Leibniz or Spinoza for their theories is for there to exist a method by which they could be said to have consciously initiated and created their theories.

Inference through Comparison: If knowing involves contrasting as Dretske and Schaffer have suggested, and the events to be contrasted are as complex and limitless as the view of Murphy has been interpreted to mean, it would also imply that there are unlimited number of statements and real situations (contrasts) against which every knowledge claims is contrasted at any situation of knowledge claim.

For instance, if claiming to know that I am typing on the keyboard of my computer (TKC) implies knowing that I am typing on the keyboard of my computer (TKC) rather than I am inscribing on the chalkboard (TCB), the story certainly cannot end there. It extends to such statements such as “I am typing rather than merely inscribing, looking, drumming, dancing, playing etc on the keyboard rather than on the CPU, or mouse or anything else of my rather than your, his, her, our or their computer rather than car, dining table, couch or floor”.

In another example, if I say that James Clinton was born on the 12th of June, 2012, it should be stretched further in Dretske’s term to the following or more ways:

- a. that a particular James Clinton rather than anyone else (with the entire population in the world in focus)
- b. was born rather than maimed or anything else (including all the physical and non-physical events that occurred or could have occurred)
- c. on the 12th rather than any other date (30 days)
- d. of June rather than any other month on the year
- e. 2012, rather than any other year that ever were and could ever be.

To claim to know the statement “James Clinton was born on the 12th of June, 2012” involves some form of comparison with the entirety of reality. Given the positions of Dretske and Schaffer, every act of contrasting involves contrasting the totality of reality.

The implications of the foregoing analyses are:

1. In Dretske and Schaffer’s terms: Entire reality is involved in every act of knowing.

2. In Murray's terms: a person inferentially knows a conclusion only if he knows each of the claims from which the conclusion is essentially inferred, it means either that it is impossible to account for anything or that it is impossible to begin to account for anything in the first instance. That is, to account for any present knowledge involves every bit of knowledge from the very first act of knowing in one's own life. Since that very first act of knowing also requires the complementarity of another previous knowledge, the implication is that it is probably impossible to account for any knowledge in the first place.

Given the above analyses, it implies either that knowledge is impossible or that there is more to the process than mere reason and experience in classical empiricism and classical rationalism terms. To put it differently, if knowledge is possible, it would mean that the scholars have not got the right description of the processes and factors involved.

Emotion and the Existentialist Irrationality: It must be acknowledged however, that just as it has not been finally proved that either the senses alone or reason alone accounts for human knowledge, so also it is that neither rationalism nor empiricism has been completely refuted. The simple logical implication is that perhaps, both reason and the senses have parts to play in the acquisition of knowledge. If knowledge must be possible, the synergic (not mere or naive eclectic process) complementarity of rationalism and empiricism seems a more viable option to consider. Such complementarity corroborates the claim of Jacques Maritain that knowledge involves an immaterial synergy or semiotic union between the knowing subject and the known object (*see* Omoregbe, 1998: 98-99). The debate, by implication, is not limited to empiricism and rationalism alone. There are also the existentialists who argue not necessarily for the senses in opposition to knowing through reason, but even to emotion or in a more classical form to irrationalism. Unamuno (*The Tragic Sense of Life*) as representative of existentialism argues that it is an overstatement to claim that man is a rational being. In his view, knowledge acquisition involves more of feelings than reason. Sartre goes even further to describe it, not as mere feeling or emotion, but irrationality. The truth of this position notwithstanding, if reason and emotion or feeling are aspects of human psychological make-up, it is logically unimaginable that one will be able to employ one completely devoid of the influence of the other.

Going a little further, Husserl argues that certain prejudices and previously acquire influences are capable of creating obstacles between us and real knowledge (Omoregbe, 100). He advises that in acquiring knowledge, it is necessary to first employ what he called the phenomenological epoche or the phenomenological reduction to put aside all our previous assumption about the phenomenon that we plan to study. The implication of Husserl's position is that if it is ever true that some previously acquired assumptions are capable of preventing us from having a true knowledge, then it may also be possible that there are other previous assumptions that could even assist us in the process of knowing. Whether this is true or not, there is still another problem of knowing where to halt process of phenomenological reduction before an

investigator is left with emptiness or nothing. "All these, in Omoregbe's expression, may be mere exaggerations, they at least underscore the importance of reason, the senses, emotion and other events in the world (sic) in human life and in epistemological pursuit, a fact which philosophers of the past tended to ignore" (102).

Psychic Related Factors and Signs: Given the foregoing argument of this paper, the possibility exists that the totality of events in the universe, far more than have been enumerated in this paper account for each event that happens. The possibility also exists as Makinde (92-93) attributes to Hume that anything can account for anything or, as E. Lorenz (1979) insinuates that perhaps the flap of a butterfly's wings in Brazil could set off a tornado in Texas. That is, distance in terms of space and time does not foreclose the possibility of interaction. These possibilities notwithstanding, they only suggest and perhaps support the possibility that multiple events in complex interactions are involved in the occurrence of any particular events.

Furthermore, there are other events that, given their psych-epistemic nature are capable of influencing the process of knowing. Some scholars such as Scheles have even taken positions that amount to defending that some of them such as emotion are the source or cause of knowing. Bacon tells us the impact of prejudice, previous assumptions, and culture in the process of acquiring knowledge. It could also involve childhood or family background, myths, fears, news, movies, will, imaginations, expectations, cultural beliefs, particular events in the past, dreams, aspirations, images or sounds. Their effects could be negative as Descartes, Bacon or Husserl would argue, it could also be positive as Unamuno, Pascal or some of the existentialists would want us to believe. The fact however is that the probability of its contribution is undeniable. It is in fact difficult to argue that an event (mental or physical) in the universe could occur in isolation or independent of all other past and present events. The relationship or interaction uniting all these seemingly independent events into a functional whole cannot be explained in any straight jacket manner as rationalism, empiricism or any of their traditional alternatives have tried to make us believe in epistemology. If we are unable to severe interactions between spatially proximate phenomena or events, how logically can we deny the possibility of interaction between the Tornado in Texas and the flapping of a butterfly's wing in Brazil or between the sigh of Jesus on the cross and the tearing of the veil in the temple?

In African thought system, making a claim of causal link between two events that are not spatially proximate or whose link cannot be empirically verified is not strange all together. The chanting of some incantations in Lagos could be said to be responsible for the death of another man in London. The cause of the ailment of another woman in Beijing could be traced to a woman in Abuja. The wealth of a successful businessperson in Port Harcourt could be said to be the result of a sacrifice or ritual performed by his/her mother somewhere far away in his village of origin in Kwazulu-Natal.

Should personal experience be of any relevance in this paper, I still remember an experience of something that happened about the early 1980s. There was an inter-

community farmland dispute and youths from my quarter of the village were gathered at the market square. After a short deliberation, we were instructed to march to the site of the dispute. As a very devoted boy from a Christian family, I hesitated, not because of any opinion regarding the substance of the dispute, but because there were utterances made, which I considered fetish. But as a result of peer pressure and because my eldest sister was married to a man from the other community, I felt I had no choice but to follow, lest someone read meanings to it that I had compromised the position of my community. That is just half the story, the other part of the story is that the part leading to the site in question was a footpath. At that time, only employed teachers and senior civil servants could afford motor bikes. That category or class of people was not easy to come by at home during such a mid-day period when the meeting took place. Secondly, the class of elders who addressed us should, in my estimation be in their nineties and above. They were not the class of people who either could ride or be carried on a bicycle. Many of the youths came on their bicycles. Immediately after the address, they sped to the farm site. I was lucky, I got an older friend who carried me on his bicycle and, like others we raced off to the place. I was among the first eight or nine youths to reach the place. However, I got there to see one of the strangest thing in my life. The same elders who addressed us a few minutes past were already at the site in question. I tried to find out how the elders managed to reach the place before us. The best explanation given to me was that I would understand when I grew older. Others simply cautioned me from asking unnecessary questions. Other epistemological implications of the event notwithstanding, the fact is that as a mature adult from Isua-Akoko; an African community, I can hardly ever ask the same question any longer, and I can better understand why only children and outsiders could ask certain questions. In my opinion too, the link between the elders arriving at the scene earlier than others and whatever may have sped up their movement may not be too may not be more unscientific than the relationship between the flap of a butterfly's wings in Brazil could set off a tornado in Texas. Superficially, they appear unscientific. However, in the word of George Bernard Shaw (Chambers, R. 1990, 140); "You see things and you say why? But, I dream things that never were, and I say why not?" Whatever the case however, it would not be strange if the same event happens today and I find some women sitting on a mat of feathers and reciting some incantations.

The issue here is not about whether the sitting on the feather mat that took the elders to the site or not. The point however, is that Africans have long understood or speculated about the possibility of some synergic interactions between separate events whose connections are not easily empirically observable. In African traditional medicine, to treat a broken bone on a person's foot, the native doctor could break the leg of a chicken such that when the leg of the chicken is becoming healed, the leg of the human victim also became healed in the same progression. It is also a common story to hear of someone who had an accident and broke his left arm seven days after someone in his village had broken the left arm of a carved image named after the victim. As the Latin saying goes: *ex Africa semper aliquid novi* (there is always something new from

Africa), there is a particular weird story from an African countryside called Isua as it is in many other communities. The People believe that if a married woman engages in an extra-marital sex, either her husband, children or herself will die in no distant time, and the death will be preceded by some strange occurrences around the family. The phenomenon in question has, like many others failed to attract scholarly attention even from among African scholars and anthropologists. The attitude of scholars notwithstanding, it is a sort of psych-semiotic scheme described variously as African symbolism, African semiosis or simply as myth.

The point is not whether the stories are actually true or not. Of course, some of such stories are hardly ever credible. The fact however, is that Africans have long thought about the possibility that the entire world is one single system in a synergic link. Perhaps, the telephone system and other communication gadgets could never have come into being if someone never gave it a thought that the flap of a butterfly's wings in Brazil could set off a tornado in Texas or not.

The epistemological status of African thought systems notwithstanding, the argument of this paper is that the mono-media patterns of rationalism or empiricism are inadequate explanations of human knowledge. The entire universe perhaps is a synergic system with surer links than human reason have ever discovered. The fact however that we have not rationally or empirically observe the connections in question should not be sufficient reasons to deny their existence as traditional empiricists and traditional rationalists have done. The point here is not that the connections necessarily exist. Rather, the argument is that there are not genuine reasons to deny that numerous phenomena come into play in the act of knowing (de Vreese, 2006: 125-150), and that if that is true, it means that the world could causally be connected than scholars have acknowledged. Even if the contents of the study are not definitive and are assailable, its stories hang together logically and, the arguments credibly lead to the conclusions inferred.

Following the trajectory of this discussion, do we then conclude in an eclectic fashion that a conglomeration of universal events accounts for any present knowledge? Of course, that is also a possibility. However, there is nothing in the discussion so far to necessarily suggest that. Although the totality of universal events (reality) is suggested as accounting for any present event, the relationship between these events as suggested by Maritain is synergic rather than mere combination or chaotic conglomeration. A synergic relationship is different from mere combination. In a mere combination, there may or may not be any influence on each other among the various components, but in synergic relationship, an orderly influence on one another is a given. For any claim to knowledge therefore, the influence and participation of the totality of reality working together in a synergic interaction seems more probable, logical and more intellectually viable than to assume that reason alone or the senses alone or any of the other components working alone account for our knowledge.

There is one more problem here. If we must accept that reason alone is incapable of giving us knowledge and neither the senses nor any other aforementioned

component acting alone can bring us to know or give us any reliable knowledge, should we also accept that human knowledge is also determined by those components working together as a synergy? In some sense, yes, because the knowing subject is part and parcel of the totality of reality working in a synergic mode.

From the argument to support the belief that the plethora of factors or the totality of reality are involved in every act of knowing, it becomes probable that the process of knowing or acquiring knowledge is far more complex than the traditional epistemology has discovered or analysed. If the positions of Shaffer and Clinton (1999: 283–300) and Postman, Neil (xxxx: 22-24) that a changing human society cannot afford to be established on a static conception of truth, knowledge and epistemology are anything to go by, then there is the need for a changing, dynamic and constant re-evaluation of positions in philosophical epistemology in order to further re-energise the debates in other fields.

Conclusion

The paper takes up the traditional positions in epistemology that knowledge comes from sense experience or from reason alone. It examines the process involved in knowing from the point of view of events involved. The paper comes to the position that there are not genuine reasons to deny that numerous and perhaps uncountable number of phenomena comes into play in the act of knowing. If that is anything to reckon with, it means that the entire reality could causally be connected synergically than scholars have acknowledged. It is therefore inferred that the act of knowing is inter-media. The connection between physical and non-physical events and between the numerous events, the act of knowing and the knower and even the entire reality are semiotic linked. The ability of a human mind to grasp the knowledge of the process while remaining part of the process is itself a psychological event of a class apart. It implies that the entire universe, regardless of how event in it appear to be free standing are linked in a synergic whole. The active or causal link between the universally connected events is more complex and semiotic such that every act of knowing involves multilevel and multimedia code switching. Given the aforementioned intermediality of the universal semiotic synergy, philosophical epistemology can neither ignore nor remain indifferent in the ongoing vibrant debate in relation to intermediality and the changing conceptual scheme and expect to be relevant to human society.

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