

THE MEANING AND BEAUTY OF DEATH: THE SOMETHINGNESS FROM THE NOTHINGNESS OF MAN.

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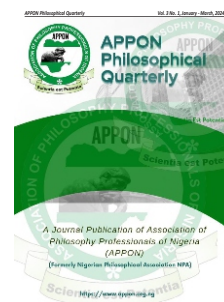
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Abstract

Edward Osborne Wilson is reported to have attempted answers to the puzzles of human existence namely, who am I? what should I do in life? What is the meaning of life? Is there a hereafter for humanity? These interrogatives which have situated the human species on an evolutionary continuum have not been fully answered by humans from time immemorial though, they still remained beholden to primitive survival impulses. The paper argues on this score that, as a being that encapsulate change, discontinuity and continuity, man's dissolution through death is not an external and public fact that creates a sense of loss and saddens humanity, but an internal possibility of his being. It is the fulfilment of the Man project of self-liberation, self-transcendence, and a process of surpassing one's existential condition. We shall argue further that, in this form of change, man ceases to be the impersonal social being among beings and has freed himself from the servitude of the anonymous “they” and thereby opened himself to his own most potentiality for being. In birth, there is the change of nonbeing to being, of nothingness to somethingness. In death man changes his constitution of somaticity to pure being; to a spiritual reality. We shall argue the conclusion that, in death, Man further becomes the most vitalizing fact of life and the cardinal indicator of authentic selfhood. He transcends from nothingness to somethingness.

Key Words: Being onto Death, Change and Continuity, Mind-Body Dualism, Somethingness from the Nothingness of Man.

Introduction:

Alvin Toffler, in his book *Future Shock*, says that what makes men so worried about the future is 'the roaring current of change, a current so powerful today that it overturns institutions, shifts our values and shrives our roots'. Today humanity is not only undergoing shattering stress, disorientation, but also experiencing increased power for action and increased action for increased being. The phenomenon of man, starting from the formation of our planet through the

emergence of life, and later the end state referred to as the Omega point by de Chardin is a process of change that intrigues Man. Of particular interest to us here is the question of the somethingness as well as the nothingness of Man; of his death and of what becomes of him after death. Such is what the Heraclitean dictum argues as change; which as it were is a necessary quality of existence.

The major concern of meta-physicians is what becomes of the two composing

entities; body-pure matter, and soul-pure form/spirit at the disintegration of the physical body. In Plato's¹ dialogues, we get an essentially dualist approach that draws a line of demarcation between the spirit and the flesh, between the body and the mind, the Idea and the particular object which was later popularised by the French philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650) who argued the thesis that the nature of mind and body are completely different from one another and that each could exist by itself.² We are however constantly reminded by recent researches that, there is a necessary connection between the mind and the body as a two-way relationship where the mind influences the body, and the body influences the mind.³ While opinions are divided between the materialists' meta-physician on the one hand, and the idealists on the other, there are those who claim, not without some reason, that they have penetrated the veil which hangs over the every grave that divide this life from the mystery that lies beyond, and have thus looked upon the reality of life after death. For these people the case for incorporeity of the soul is a reality. But the other side of the coin of the argument views such belief as blind faith, evidence of which is insufficient for reasoning men. Such

belief they conclude is mythical to say the least.

It is the aim of this paper to survey and evaluate these two opposing schools of thought in the light of the present day philosophical discourse. We argue here that, the soul; the spiritual substance, immaterial entity survives beyond this physical world. While not leaving out the possibility that the long held belief in incorporeity by geniuses like Plato, Aquinas, Augustine etc. may turn out to be mythical, the essay argues further that, there is mass evidence in nature itself in favour of incorporeity of the soul; that from nothingness in death (body), Man transcends to somethingness in spirit (soul).

What does it mean to die?

It was Sunday morning, 18th October, 2009 at exactly 6:15am that the news of the death of a dear brother and friend, Moses Vihinga Gberikon filtered in through *Harvest FM* Radio station Makurdi, Nigeria. The news of his death not only shocked his friends, relatives, colleagues and acquaintances to the morrows, it also surprised every person associated with this man of easy going life. I pondered over what could have caused his death but, without an answer. I then remembered and regurgitated some words I once read in a condolence book of a dead

¹ In Plato's *Phaedo*. Plato asserts that the true substances are not *physical bodies*, which are ephemeral, but the *eternal Forms* of which bodies are imperfect copies. These Forms according to Plato not only make the world possible, they also make it intelligible, because they perform the role of universals, or what Frege called 'concepts'. He opines that, *Forms* are the grounds of intelligibility, they are what the intellect must grasp in the process of understanding. In *Phaedo* Plato presents a variety of arguments for the immortality of the soul, but the one that is relevant for our purposes is that the intellect is immaterial because Forms are immaterial and intellect must have an affinity with the Forms it apprehends (78b4–84b8). This affinity is so strong that the soul strives to leave the body in which it is imprisoned and to dwell in the realm of *Forms*.

² One of the deepest and most lasting legacies of Descartes philosophy is his thesis that mind and body are really distinct—a thesis now called “mind-body dualism.” He reaches this conclusion by arguing that the nature of the mind (that is, a thinking, non-extended thing) is completely different from that of the body (that is, an extended, non-thinking thing), and therefore it is possible for one to exist without the other. <https://iep.utm.edu/descartes-mind-body-dualism/#:~:text=One%20of%20the%20deepest%20and,from%20that%20of%20the%20body%20> accessed 11th April, 2024.

³ Studies by [Tamara Bhandari](#) published on April 19, 2023 suggests that Mind-body connection is built into brain. Findings point to the brain areas that integrate planning, purpose, physiology, behavior, movement: <https://medicine.wustl.edu/news/mind-body-connection-is-built-into-brain-study-suggests/#:~:text=Louis%20reveals%20that%20a%20connection,blood%20pressure%20and%20heart%20rate> accessed on 10th April, 2024.

friend; *ku ku ku, ku ku!!!* These words not only resonate the frequent nature of death, they express the lamentations, human incapacity, fear of the unknown, lack of knowledge of death, and of what it means to die.

The question of death exemplifies the paradox of human existence. It expresses the limited essence of man in whom fear of the end of life, of the self, a reality that man is reduced to nothing from something against his inherent burning desire to transcend his limited being and surpass his present existence and become something out of nothing in death. Such double think leaves man with no option but to reason about death in personal terms; as an obscenity, a nasty and brutish thing which polite persons will talk about only in low tones. Death, even when unmentionable, remains universal, fearful, imminent, inexorable and inescapable. Philosophers and Theologians alike are unanimous in agreeing on this phenomenon as the one sure fact of life; that one day, with or without warning, quietly or painfully, life will cease to exist.

St. Augustine nicely lends his voice here that, “from the moment man begins to exist in a body which is destined to die, he is involved all the time in a process whose end is death”. The Ageless Wisdom of the Buddha captures it more dramatically when it states that;

...By the example of the change of days, months, and the four season.

Come to realize that the blossoming spring flower-like body.

Is subject to change, as time passes its youth fades away,

And the arrival of the lord of death is certain.

By the example of the fall of ripened fruits.

Come to realize that...what is born

will die.

By the example of the arising of reflections in ponds.

Come to realize that various phenomenon appear but have no true existence.⁴

The suggestion here is that, the phenomenon of death is so hard an existential truth that, Man cannot escape its study. Batista Mondin records here that, this inescapable “phenomenon of death is too frequent, striking and painful to allow us to ignore it”.⁵ It suffices then to reflect this day, on *death* and possibly understand what it means to die, and in particular to fathom what happened to man in his death (*The Big Sleep*). The Sages of Ancient times distinguish two types of deaths, namely, *existential-ontological death* and public *death*. Understood in a reverse order, public death or clinical death is a social fact. It provokes in Man the cessation of the functions necessary for the essential to the body; it is the separation of the body from the soul. This type of death elicits written epitaphs, dirges (sorrowful songs), expression of condolences and sympathies to the dead person's family.

Here understood, death gets treated as an evil, a necessary end and an unfortunate incident that must be overcome by man someday. Taken on this score, Religion and Mythology attempts to provide answers as to when man would conquer death and thus live forever. *Existential death* or absolute death on the other hand, is the definitive separation of the soul from the body. It is rooted in the very structure of human existence. It is the end of *being-in-the-world*. Argued here, absolute death is not something evil that happens to man that he can overcome by being redeemed from an original sin. It is rather a human experience that begins the very day that man is born, it is potency in wait for actualization; a

⁴ Tulku Tondup, “Fragments of the Ageless Wisdom.” In Radha Burnier, ed., *The Theosophist*, vol. 126 no. (November 2004), 67

⁵ Batista Mondin, *Philosophical Anthropology* (Bangalore: India, Theological, 2007), 263.

necessary possibility that puts an end to all material possibilities to make way for an immaterial, indissoluble, incorruptible and immortal spirit. Jim Unah simplifies this form of death when he says, "it is not just the ending of life or some unfortunate incident which befalls man but a vitalizing structural component of the human being".⁶ Sam Vaknin adds his voice here that, a classical point of departure in defining death seems to be life itself. Death he says, is perceived either as a cessation of life - or as a "transit area", on the way to a continuation of life by other means. While the former approach presents a disjunction, the latter is a continuum, death being nothing but a corridor into another plane of existence.⁷ It is understood as the cessation of the exercise of force over physical systems. It is the sudden absence of physical effects previously associated with the dead object, a singularity, a discontinuity. It is a terminal change in the state of the hardware.

Death awareness must continuously regulate our lives; that, death is something we do not bargain for, something not negotiated for, but which must, in the final analysis, happen to us. Death is a possibility which is already imprinted in our being which we cannot overcome no matter how we try. As we reflect soberly on death, we should not lose sight of what we do with our existential selves as we turn the wheel of life here on earth. Our actions and inactions calls to question the fundamental principle of absolute justice (*the law of Karma*) which ensures that, happiness follows good and selfless deeds while sufferings results from evil and selfish deeds, it is above all, our great teacher in life, giving us many opportunities to learn. We should remember and learn also that, existential life is a window for tomorrow's harvest of the good

,the bad and the ugly, and that, Karma not only brings us the effects of our past actions and inactions, but also gives us the ability to shape our future by the way we act *now*.

Understandably existential life is a voyage of discovery –the discovery of the true nature of things and the discovery of ourselves, first of all of our superficial nature, our failings and weakness, all derived from a sense of *self*, but then perhaps the downing discovery of, and approach to what is left when that *self* no longer is; that Oneness which is the *SELF* of all.

One undeniable fact about human life is that, death for Man is not only a possibility of his being; it is an automatic, mechanical and biological event. Man unlike other beings is not only aware of his death and the death of other beings, he is conscious of death, he can make it a subject of meditation, and pledge his life for death. Batista Munding captures this unique quality of Man when he says, "to have knowledge seems to belong properly to Man as much as it belongs to him to know thought...Death is for Man such a distinction that one cannot renounce it, without which one cannot live. This manifestly means that differently from the other beings, we possess this distinct sign that death is something for us".⁸ It is a biological necessity that undertakes to purify the soul. It is the separation and release of the soul from the body. The question of urgent human importance is whether this biological necessity that occurs in the separation of the body from the spirit marks the end of Man? In every death that occurs, we are led to ask ourselves: what is left of the being of those who die and what will become of us when we are struck by the same scourge?

Humanity is always in this case, first and

⁶ J. I. Unah, ed., *Philosophy, Society and Anthropology* (Lagos, Fadec Publishers Publications in India. 1996), 96

⁷ Sam Vaknin, *Encyclopaedia Of Philosophy* (Lidija Rangelovska: A Narcissus Publication Imprint, Skopje, Republic of Macedonia, 5th Edition, 2009), 278

⁸ Batista Munding, *Philosophical Anthropology*, (2007), 268-269

foremost, asking questions and questioning answers, all in an effort to unravel the mystery of death. How can anyone discover what life means from which we can also understand what death entails? If death ends all, if we have either to hope for good to come or fear evil, we must ask ourselves what we are here for, and how in this circumstances we must conduct ourselves. These interrogatives may have informed Tom Stoppard to query thus, "Who are we that so much should converge on our so little deaths...? To be told so little—to such an end—and still, finally to be denied an explanation...?"⁹ In seeking metaphysically grounded answers to our interrogatives on the true being of Man, we must be well informed on the rapport between body and soul.

Mind-Body Dualism.

The interrogations, 'what is the fundamental nature of mind and body?' and 'how are mind and body related?' are of consequence in resolving the further questions of 'how am I to face death' and 'Is there life after death?'. As a purely philosophical concept, the mind-body dualism represents a metaphysical viewpoint that mind and body are two entirely separate entities, each with a distinct essential nature. We argue here that, body and mind, are unified under one concept, the concept of the person that,

... a person in contrast to a mere animal, has both physical and psychological characteristics: like many other physical organisms, he can sleep, eat and move his limbs, but unlike many of them he is capable of having beliefs, desires and thoughts.¹⁰

It thus seems therefore that, whatever mind (variously called spirit, soul) is, it is inextricably bound up with the body. It suffices to state therefore that, each mental

state has a physiology associate with it, i.e., a positive or negative effect felt in the physical body. The question of urgent here is that of explaining how it is that mental phenomena and or types of phenomena (mind) can be such as to be related with phenomena or types of phenomena (body) whose nature are physical in terms of anatomy of the human person. If indeed man is something in addition to his body, how do these entities relate and how do they ultimately end. The mind-body problem is clearly intriguing to which solution is offered from two opposing angles, namely that a human being is simply body and nothing else besides. This materialist theory advanced by Thomas Hobbes and supported by Nietzsche and Feuerbach and other behaviorist psychologists, maintain that what we call mental events or activities of mind or soul, are really like physical events only in various combinations of matter in motion. Thus Nietzsche once remarked: "Body can entirely and nothing more; and soul is only the name of something in the body"¹¹

The logic of this statement implies that, the physical movements that occur in the brain are what we call thoughts, and these are produced by other events in the material world, either outside our bodies, or inside, and in turn can produce further physical motions in ourselves or outside ourselves. When we say that we have a sensation of yellow, for example, this is explained as the result of certain light waves stimulating the optic nerve which in turn causes a certain pattern of motion in the brain.

There are however, a greater majority of those who have agreed that human beings are something more than their bodies, and this something more has variously been referred to as, the mind, spirit, soul, and the self. For this school of thought, there are

⁹ Stoppard, 1981:10

¹⁰ M. Cynthia, *Mind – Body Identity Theories* (London: Routledge, 1992), vii.

¹¹ P. Edwards "Introduction" In P. Edwards and A. Pap, eds., *A Modern Introduction to Philosophy* (New York: The Free Press, 1973), 17.

many good grounds for supposing that the mind or soul survives the shattering disintegration of the human body.

Clearly, we have come to accept the fact that the human being possesses a mind and a body which both have causal connections. This fact has been lucidly articulated by the German philosopher Lotze (1888-1856) in Richard Popkin et al

.... It is impossible to speak of a bare movement without thinking of the mass whose movement it is: and it is just as impossible to conceive a sensation existing without accompanying of that which has it or rather of that which feels it.¹²

This thinking is anchored on the belief that, additional to the physical body of man is the indestructible substance. This is referred to by the scholastics and Descartes as the substance theory according to which there is something in human beings over and above the body. This something variously referred to as the subject or owner of the experiences, the spiritual substance, the soul, gives a human being the unity s/he possesses as a human being. Protagonists of this position contend that, the self (soul, spirit) which is thus given in every experience, is not only, simply and abiding the same name during the varying modes of consciousness, but is furthermore indestructible and therefore immortal.

But as viewed elsewhere above, arguments built around the substance theory are said to be meaningless for the simple reason that there are no facts which warrant the inference to a permanent underlying spiritual substance. Bertrand Russell, a close associate of this position avers that, all our experiences are accompanied by some marginal bodily sensations – of our breathing, our eye-ball movements, our stationary or moving limbs, or hunger or

satiety, our bodily tension etc. In his bundle-theory, Russell comes out clearly thus:

We think and feel and act, but there is not in addition to thoughts and feelings and actions, a bare entity, the mind or the soul, which does or suffers these occurrences. The mental continuity of a person is a continuity of habit and memory.¹³

Thus, the human person is nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions which each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and is in a perpetual flux. David Hume, A.J. Ayer and W.K. Clifford among others subscribe to this thinking. They aver that, spiritual substance is not like a mythical animal which we could recognize if we come across it but which as a matter of fact does not exist. We don't even know what it would be like to come cross it. The argued point here is not only that the vast majority of men are unable to perform the difficult feat of experiencing themselves as substances, it is rather that, such a feat is not conceivable. There is nothing that would count as stumbling upon oneself as opposed to some particular perception.

The stream of the materialists' argument and a few others of the dualistic interactionists is here hinged on the belief that the human being is simply nothing over and above his body, the various experiences he goes through, the relation between these experiences such as similarity, causation and memory and his capacities, habits, temperament and ideals. The mind and body they say are both attributes of the same entity and identical with the physical order of nature. But such a conclusion is not only untrue and unsound; it also conflicts with our knowledge of the human person who is believed to be something over and above his physical composition. Desecrates confirms this when he says, with the doubtful

¹² R. H. Popkin, *Philosophy Made Simple* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981), 99.

¹³ Bertrand Russell, "Do we survive Death" in Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects* (New York: Simon and Schuster Inc. 1957), 89.

exceptions of idiots and infants in arms, every human being has a body and a mind¹⁴ His body and soul, it may be said are ordinarily harnessed together, but after the death of the body his soul continues to exist and function.

The point at issue here is that the two co-exist though; they are distinct in state and activity as much as their end. While human bodies are in space and are subject to the mechanical laws which govern all other bodies in space, minds are not in space nor are their operations subject to mechanical laws. It follows by simple logic that bodies disintegrate at death by the very fact of its constituent – pure matter. But minds which are not similarly constituted and subject to the same mechanical laws as bodies, survives the annihilation of the body.

Thus, to say that men cannot perform the feat of experiencing themselves as substances is simply meaningless. The career of the mind is private and so only an individual can take direct cognizance of the state and processes of his own mind. Indeed men have direct and unchallengeable cognizance of the self. Gilbert Ryle more forcefully supports this view of man's self-transcendence. "In consciousness, self-consciousness and introspection, he is directly and authentically apprised of the present states and operations of his mind."¹⁵

Thus far, man can be credited, with two interrelated entities; one consisting in the grosser movements of the parts and particles of our bodies. This entity of man is outward and material, and the other consisting of much more palpable ghostly and secret changes which are inward and spiritual.

Death as Discontinuity and Continuity

Since the time of Plato five hundred years before the birth of Jesus, the discussion of immortality has been conducted by the

greatest minds upon the highest levels of human thought in the areas of theology, philosophy, science, psychology and poetry. Thus nobody can speak on the immortality of the soul at this date without being acutely conscious of the fact that there is nothing new that can be said.

But the case for immortality has been torn between two opposing ends. While some have explored and uncovered the mystery that lies beyond and have thus looked upon the reality of survival after death, others have simply questioned the evidence upon which one is invited to believe in immortality. The evidence, when provided at all, concludes supporters of the myth of immortality theory, may be wholly insufficient for reasoning men, and so nothing but empty verbiage.

When Spinoza attempted a solution to the body-mind problem, saying that both are attributes of one and the same entity, he was most obviously alluding to the logic that for everything that happens in one realm, a corresponding event occurs in the other. For him, the logical order of mind (soul) was identical with the physical order, (the body) and vice versa. By the streak of this logic, it follows that, the argument in support of immortality is a myth.

A critical evaluation of this position reveals one notorious fact; the refusal of many to reappraise their belief that death is not the end of what we call life. But the fact of the matter however is that even those who claim to believe in immortality still tell themselves and others that neither side of the question is susceptible of proof. Obviously, the protagonist of the myth of the soul, theory conclude that the thought of life after death is the share creation of the believer whose believe is not founded on rational evidence. On the other hand, the mass evidence against the persistence of personal consciousness, the mind, spirit or

¹⁴ P. Edwards, *A Modern Introduction to Philosophy*, 180.

¹⁵ G. Ryle, *In Body and Mind: Readings in Philosophy*. In G.N.A. Vessel, ed. (London: 1969), 339.

the soul is as strong as the evidence of gravitation;

It is as convincing and unassailable as the proof of the destruction of wood or coal by fire. If it is not certain that death ends personal identity and memory, then almost nothing that man accepts as true is susceptible of proof.¹⁶

But of course this is wrong thinking which amounts to poor analogy leading to what Gilbert Ryle would call category – mistake. The human being is a composition of two stuff; the body which is material in space and is subject to the mechanical laws which govern all bodies in space, and the mind which on the hand is not in space nor is its operations subject to mechanical laws. Unlike pure matter disintegrate after death, mind soul of spirit which is pure form survives death and continues to exist and function.

Here again we are confronted with the problem of rational evidence. Belief in immortality goes with it reason for believing. But people who believe in the immortality of the soul are hesitant to question, seek, and to find credible rational evidence for their belief. According to Durrow, they do not ask because they know that only silence comes out of the eternal darkness of endless space. As he questions, if people really believed in a beautiful, happy glorious land waiting to receive them when they died, If they believed that all pain and suffering would be left behind, why would they live through weeks, months and even years of pain and torture while a cancer eats its way to the vital parts of the body? Clearly, our organized fight against death speaks volumes; that we don't believe in any real sense, but only hope which can simply be translated as blind faith.

Objectively, every thinking person knows that faith can only come through

belief which in itself implies a condition of mind that accepts a certain idea. This condition can be brought about only by evidence. From experience is simply the unsupported statement of those we 'trust' and or are our religious leaders, which is not much stronger and are not rational enough to build a positive belief in immortality. The cherished expectation here is that, believers should be just as willing to jettison their beliefs in response to (superior) evidence.

Another reason for discountenancing belief in immortality is said to be the beginning of life and its end. Such argument as to continuation of life (soul) after death is primitive and for primitive man who like the rest of the animals had no conception of life as having a beginning and an end. Today, they say, every one of the ordinary intelligence knows how life begins, and to examine the beginning of life leads to inevitable conclusions about the way life ends. If a man has a soul, it must creep in somewhere during the period of gradation and growth. After being fertilized by union with another cell, it follows similarly that, at death, such activities as memory, consciousness which portends life, or the soul terminate. Here again Durrow argues that, it is wishful thinking to fathom an idea of immortality. As he put it, no such idea as belief in immortality of the germ cells, fertilized under right conditions, could satisfy the yearnings of the individual for a survival of life after death. He queried:

If man has a soul that persists after death, that goes to a heaven of the blessed or to hell of the condemned, where are these places? It is not easily imagined as it once was. How does the soul make its journey? What does immortal man find when he gets there, and how will he live after he reaches the end of endless space?¹⁷

It may be argued here that the conception

¹⁶ C. Durrow, "The Myth of Immortality" in *Newsweek* Vol. CXXIX No. 10. (1998), 262.

¹⁷ Ibid. 266.

of life having a beginning and an end may not be enough a factor to argue against belief in immortality. For one, Durrow's contention that individuation of animal life can begin its development only through fertilization by union with another cell is no longer true in this age of genetic engineering and biotechnology. It is now feasible to develop human life from adult tissues usually through asexual means and the offspring will be highly identical like identical twins (human beings) in every material and spiritual way.¹⁸ So, inquisitive minds like Durrow, will be preoccupied with such issues as to whether human life developed through asexual means can and should marry, eat, and or laugh etc.

Besides, questions of metaphysical nature as those of life beyond this world need not necessarily find answers to qualify them as true or false. Indeed, to insist on rational evidence in matters of faith and religion is not a strong enough reason for disbelieve in life after death. As very ably shown in a debate between Carl Sagan and Rev. Joan Brown Campbell, evidence for most religious issues does not necessarily count as supporting reality. Sagan's insistence on backing with evidence reveals our position thus:

Carl, do you believe in Love? And he said, of course I do; he was very much in love with his wife, and I said, can you prove love exist? And at first he said, well, certainly, but eventually he agreed that love, like faith, has something unprovable at its core, but that doesn't mean it does not exist.¹⁹

The question at issue here is that, believe in immortality is not founded on mere superstition, but arguments which appeals to intellect, which may not necessarily require evidence or prove to pass the 'noble' test of acceptability. In our human experience, there is many an idea which we

accept for good.

But antagonist of the immortality theory view such belief as mere wishful thought which ignores facts and enthrone blind faith, wild dreams, hopeless hopes and cowardly fears of the human mind. The most feasible thesis according to the antagonist of the immortality theory is to discountenance the modern scientific doctrine of the indestructibility of matter and force as pure sophistry. They argued that while it is probably true that no matter or force has ever being or even can be destroyed, it is likewise true that there is no connection whatever between the notion that personal consciousness and memory persist after death and the scientific theory that matter and force are indestructible. Giving an analogy of a lump of coal which disintegrates in burning, Durrow argues that the process of change in the human being takes the forms of growth, disease, senility, death and decay. In his words:

The thing we call life is nothing other than state of equilibrium which endures for a short span of years between the two opposing tendencies of nature – the one that builds up, and the one that tears down. In old age, the tearing down process has already gained the ascendancy and when intervenes, the equilibrium is finally upset by the complete stoppage of the building process, so that nothing remains but complete disintegration.²⁰

The argument here is that all that remains of the debris is irrevocably dispersed and any idea of survival of any part of the human being exists only in the primitive conceptions of undeveloped minds. Whatever was covertly or overtly referred to as soul, mind or spirit is destroyed, dispersed, disintegrated beyond repair by what we call death. Thus man's refusal to give up the idea of immortality can only be

¹⁸ see *Newsweek*, vol. cxxix, No. 11:1

¹⁹ *Newsweek*, 1997, 5.

²⁰ C. Durrow, "The Myth of Immortality." (1997), 258.

explained in what Schopenhauer call “the will to live: i.e. a continuation of our present state of existence, not an uncertain reincarnation in a mysterious world of which we know nothing.

Accordingly, belief in immortality of the soul is a form of escapism which is unnecessary and undesirable. What is paramount to the human being is not the emotion, demanding a future life, but things that really affect the happiness of the individual here on earth, such as companionship of friends, debts, poverty and disease, food and shelter etc. concerns of this nature save the mortal man from the ever troubling metaphysical problems. At the end of the day's labour we are glad to lose our consciousness in sleep, and intellectual at least, we look forward to the long rest from the stresses and storms that are always incidental to existence.

But this view of man is too simplistic. In proper perspective, man is a being set apart, distinct from all the rest of nature and under divine injunction to complete God's creation. Man's over endowment as a creature of this earth, his surplus equipment for the adventure of his present life speaks volumes. If this life is all, what need has man for all these mental faculties, moral aspirations, spiritual ideals which move him to be distinctly a man as contrasted with the animal? If existence upon the earth is his only destiny, why should man not prefer the swiftness of the deer, the strength of the lion, the vision of the eagle, to any endowment of mind and heart, as more adequate provision for the purely task for physical survival in a physical world? This most probably explains why St. Augustine evocatively states that, “our soul is restless until it rest in the Lord”. By extension, man is incomplete without the feeling or idea of immortality. There is a feeling of emptiness or desire of a life after death which yearns for satisfaction.

This emotion or desire is natural and that it persists beyond the grave is no wishful thinking. So, death, as opposed to inertia or entropy, is not something that modern physics is fully equipped to deal with. Physics, by definition, deals with forces and measurable effects. It has nothing to say about force-less, energy-devoid physical states (oxymora), so says Sam Vaknin.²¹

In true perspective, man is equipped not only for this environment, but also for something more. What he is in mind and heart and spirit in the range of his interests and the lift of his soul, can only be explained on the supposition that he is preparing for another and vaster life. What man bears within him is evidence that he is destined for some father port than any upon this shore.

African societies acknowledge death as a necessary end of Man though, it harbours feelings of continuity. In its rich traditions and orature, all humans wear the garment of death though, death is not the end of Man. Awolalu and Dopamu aptly captures this thinking thus;

That death is not the final end and does not write finish to the life of Man, that death is only a transition from the physical world to the spirit world, and that the deceased is only making a journey from this earth to another place, is seen in the funeral arrangements and burial. The corpse is thoroughly washed; it is laid in state in very good costly cloths in preparation for the journey. It is believed that the deceased is being made ready and fit for the next world.²²

Most obviously, the idea of immortality is a reality which man enjoys because the signs are already upon him. As William James himself alludes more compellingly, we are under no compulsion to believe in immortality as for example, to believe that “things equal to the same thing are equal to

²¹ Sam Vaknin, *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. 5th Ed. (Lidija Rangelovska: A Narcissus Publication Imprint, 2009), 283.

²² Awolalu and Dopamu (1979, 256)

each other, yet we are free to believe, if we so desire without being guilty of superstition.”²³ There is every reason to refuse giving up the idea of immortality because there are perfectly good and sufficient reasons while an intelligent man may intelligently believe in immortality. He may believe in immortality, says John Holmes because there is no reason for not believing in it. True, immortality has never being proved, but it has never being disproved either. As he put it: “As there is no positive testimony to prove it true, so it there no negative testimony to prove it untrue... and such absence of testimony does not even raise negative presumption.”²⁴

In this case, therefore, the question is open for arduous philosophic inquiry, and so must our mind be open. John Stuart Mill's postulation may help to resolve our dilemma. He says, “To anyone who feels it conducive either to his satisfaction or to his usefulness to hope for a future state..., there is no hindrance to his indulging that hope.”²⁵ Indeed, it is not senseless to argue that there is no reason for not believing in immortality. This idea is not sentimental but elemental. It is grounded in the necessities and forces we possess as shown by the whole philosophy of evolution, which has given to us that fundamental interpretation of life as the continuous adjustment of inner relations to outer relations. John Holmes argues this position more scientifically and logically thus:

An organism lives by successfully adjusting itself to the conditions of its environment by developing itself inwardly in such a way as to meet the conditions of reality... life in other words is so definitely a matter of the successful consideration of inner

relations with outer relations, that it is altogether impossible to conceive that in any specific relation, the subjective terms is non-existent. What exists within is the sign and symbol and guarantee, of what exists without.²⁶

Most obviously man has never existed without the thought of immortality. All people, from the rudest to the most civilized, yearn for another life beyond our physical existence, so the idea of immortality could not have appeared within the consciousness of man, except as the impression of the reality which made it what it is. But of course, our belief in immortality is further justified in our belief that our souls have potentialities and promises which should not, as indeed they cannot, be subject to the chance vicissitude of earthly fortune. Our souls are not and cannot be destroyed and or broken as our bodies by the material forces of this world, indeed it is inconceivable that eternal powers, Death only means a new beginning. As the body turns to ashes, the spirit mounts as to a flame. Professor George Herbert catches this thought more profoundly when he looked upon the dead body of his wife; “though no regrets are proper for the manner of her death (accident). Yet who can contemplate the fact of it and not call the world irrational if, out of deference to a few particles of disordered matter it excludes so fair a spirit,”²⁷ it is inconceivable that man can be so annihilated that nothing will ever remain as this evidence and vindication of this cosmic process. Charles Darwin, though an agnostic attacked this challenge and proclaimed the conviction that, it is an intolerable thought that, man and all other sentient beings are doomed to complete annihilation after such a long continued

²³ R. Holmes, *Ten Reasons for believing in immortality*, in P. Edwards, ed., *A Modern Introduction to Philosophy*, (1973:252).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid, 252.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid, 25

slow process of change.²⁸

Unless the Universe is crazy, something must remain, otherwise it will have no meaning for man. The process must justify itself by producing something; something that endures. This something is the spiritual essence of man's nature the soul which is immortal. To deny this over-bearing fact seems to me amounts to intellectual confusion. In agreement with this thinking, John Fiske puts the issues more aggressively thus: "The more thoroughly comprehend the process of evolution, the more we are likely to feel that, to deny the everlasting persistence of the spiritual element in man is to rob the whole process of its meaning. It goes far toward putting us to permanent intellectual confusion."²⁹ Using the doctrine of conservation of energy, we argue like Sir Oliver Lodge that, 'whatever is, both was and shall be'. Persistence, he says, is the test or criterion. In his words,

...that the soul of man is just as much force in the world as magnetism or steam or electric is and that if the cosmic law of conservation forbids the destruction of the latter, it must as well forbid the former. Anything else is inconceivable. The universe cannot be thrifty of its physical and so wasteful of its spiritual resources.³⁰

Just as we would laugh at someone who contended that the heat in often metal which disappears under the cooling action of or water, had thereby been destroyed, we would similarly laugh at a man who argues that the personality of a human being, which disappears under the chilling influence of death has thereby been annihilated.

The question of urgent human importance here therefore is what becomes the being of man after death, and of what

becomes the being of the individual who suffers death. Death and any death for that matter, is not, cannot and should not be an external and public fact that creates a sense of loss and saddens humanity, but an internal possibility of the being of man. It is the fulfillment of the man project of self-liberation, self-transcendence, and a process of surpassing one's existential condition. In death therefore, man ceases to be the impersonal social *being* among *beings*. In this process of change, Man frees himself from the servitude of the anonymous "they" and thereby opens himself to his own most potentiality for *being*. In death, he further becomes the most vitalizing fact of life; the cardinal indicator of authentic selfhood. In death, man transcends from nothingness to somethingness; the reward of life. Such denotation very well finds placement in African knowledge systems thus:

Death after a long happy life is
glorious.
If we live too long and die in
poverty and disgrace.
We achieve nothing but sorrow.
But if death comes prematurely, the
faithful should accept.
And give thanks to God for a life
well spent.
Why should man suffer death after
all?
The Creator bestowed death to
human beings as a blessing.
Life is a stream that flows out and
flows back.
When it flows out; we call it death.
When it flows back; we call it
rebirth.
A stream that does not flow out and
flow back.
Becomes a stagnant pool full of

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

impurities that threaten good health.
Without death there can be no
rebirth.

Death carries us away; rebirth brings
us back.

We die as invalids but return in new
found health.³¹

The words above remind us that, death is a stark reality which every man must face individually. It is a possibility which all of us must realize in our own separate ways, and a burden which each man must carry for himself. This is death consciousness/awareness which reminds us to use time actively to realize our projects before it seals off our other possibilities. For in death, all preoccupations, all engagements, all concerns, all caring and all relationships are terminated.

Like orphans, we are cast into a vast universe, without being consulted, to die there. It is thus not enough to say that “death is not my portion” or that, “death is not for me”. For to say so is *inauthentic death consciousness* that offends the true essence of human existence. This mode of thinking does not portray man in his unity, reality and totality as a being- towards-death; born –to-die, but as a being in forfeiture or fallenness, who runs and runs to hide away from reality but, can neither hide nor escape death; the limiting condition of his human existence.

Death awareness must continuously regulate our lives; that, death is something we do not bargain for, something not negotiated for, but which must, in the final analysis, happen to us. Death is a possibility which is already imprinted in our being which we cannot overcome no matter how we try. As we walk the streets of human life; marry, educate ourselves to the highest levels, engage in business and make money by hook or crook, heal or kill our neighbors, and steal much money that cannot be exhausted in our life time, we are called

upon to re-examine our lives, our ways and score ourselves as we journey towards the achievement of authentic selfhood. This is a quest for self-knowledge which entails a brand of wisdom that positively transforms individual human consciousness and society. Such was the human quality that guided and guarded Socrates, Buddha and Jesus to achieve self-transcendence and liberation from sorrow, violence, hatred, and overcame for them the fear of public death.

As we reflect soberly on death, we should not lose sight of what we do with our existential selves as we turn the wheel of life here on earth. Our actions and inactions calls to question the fundamental principle of absolute justice (*the law of Karma*) which ensures that, happiness follows good and selfless deeds while sufferings results from evil and selfish deeds, it is above all, our great teacher in life, giving us many opportunities to learn. We should remember and learn also that, existential life is a window for tomorrow's harvest of the good ,the bad and the ugly, and that, Karma not only brings us the effects of our past actions and inactions, but also gives us the ability to shape our future by the way we act *now*.

Understandably existential life is a voyage of discovery –the discovery of the true nature of things and the discovery of ourselves, first of all of our superficial nature, our failings and weakness, all derived from a sense of *self*, but then perhaps the downing discovery of, and approach to what is left when that *self* no longer is; that Oneness which is the *self* of all.

The question of why, where, and how one dies is of no consequence. Not even the question of who responsible for one's death is the matter. In death, Man sleeps *The Big Sleep* to acquire the necessary and sufficient autonomous substantiality that is

³¹ S. B. Oluwole, “African Philosophy on the Threshold of Modernization,” 1st Valedictory Lecture; Philosophy Department, University of Lagos, Akoka, Yaba-Lagos. (2007), 33-34.

intrinsically a spiritual reality. Death is only the dissolution of the molecular structuralization necessary for the phenomenon of life; the definitive separation of the soul from the body in wants of perennial life. In death, the doors of life are opened for the man-project to enter into the realm in which he will finally reach his perfect fulfillment. In death, we express the wishful hope that we experience good life in the here-after referred to by the Tiv as *Alu-Gbem*. Similar thoughts crossed the mind of Alfred Tennyson the English poet (1809-92) when he wrote these words in 1850 after the death of a close friend; he expressed the wishful hope that there is a life after death and that we have something better to look forward to:

Behold, we know not anything;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last-far off- at last, to all
And every winter change to spring.
So runs my dream; but what am I?
An infant crying in the night;
An infant crying for the light;
And with no language but a cry.³²

In dying his own death therefore, man destroys death and realizes his own possibilities. Death is something towards which man strives, something that is always present within him, something always near, and towards which he comports himself with. Like every mortal, Man understands death as a cross which nobody can carry on his behalf. He knew he was born to die. Death becomes no longer an external and public fact but an internal possibility of man's being, and so no longer the sad end of a story, but something that enters into the story and invests it with dramatic character.³³ The sages know this much when they say, *Death is the possibility of the*

absolute impossibility of Dasein (Man). African wisdom literature similarly stresses this inevitability of death and admits that acceptance of death as a fact of life is necessary for an authentic existence. Such is why the Tiv likens death to a tax levied by God that must be repaid. Yanmoel Yashi, a Tiv ethno philosopher conveys this idea thus;

Tiv

Ayiooo wan Imande ngômô
Mama ku ka kpandegh
Ku Aôndo ter angerugh yô
Shie kuma uta
Yamoel vaan zee

English

(Daughter of Imande,
my mother, death is a tax
levied by God,
when it is due, you pay
I Yanmoel, do not lament.)³⁴

This is the point at which we are called upon to cogitate on death and the being of man in death. That death is a debt is obviously affirmed as an inescapable fact of- a fact which also brings the meaning of life into its full efflorescence. Tiv wisdom literature further ventures to state here that,
I trust that somehow good will be the final goal of death,
I trust that nothing walks with aimless feet,
and that life shall
Not be destroyed or cast as rubbish to the void, when God shall make the pile complete.
As an image of God, created in His likeness,
I trust that man is an absolute value with an eternal destiny.
I trust that man is treasured by the infinitely generous and merciful God that man's

³² A. Tennyson, in C. Chapman, *The Case for Christianity* (Herts, England: Lion Publishing, 1981), 28.

³³ J. I. Unah, *Philosophy, Society and Anthropology*, (1996), 96.

³⁴ Yanmoel Yashi, (1998), 30.

spiritual dimension cannot be felled by the scythe of death. (Anonymous)

A philosophical rethink of the quip above more than anything illumines our mind concerning the being of man in death (*The Big Sleep*). In this existential state, Man experiences something more than what appears to his ordinary consciousness, something that generates ideas and thoughts, a more subtle spiritual presence that makes him unsatisfied with his purely worldly conquests. Tiv wisdom literature confirms this thinking in its phenomenology of death. It states that, in every man is lodged a light that no power can extinguish, an immortal spirit. Similarly, Nietzsche, the Author of Zarathustra says, "death is the supreme possibility of human freedom. It does not represent the antithesis, but rather the highest expression of life". Perhaps, Leibnitz's long chain of syllogism as reported in Edwards seals our support for a hope for the idealistic quality of the soul. He argues thus,

The soul is a thing whose activity is thinking;

A thing whose activity is thinking is one whose activity is immediately apprehended and without any representations of parts therein is one whose activity does not contain parts is one whose activity is not motion;

A thing whose activity is not motion is not a body;

What is not a body is not in space;

What is not in space is insusceptible of motion; is insusceptible of motion is indissoluble;

What is indissoluble is incorruptible;

What is incorruptible is immortal.

Therefore, the Soul is immortal.³⁵

We are no doubt right in concluding that, in death, man demonstrates himself to be alive at the highest level; death is not the end

of man's entire psychosomatic reality; nihilism, but the attainment of a hyperpersonal mode of existence in which Man has crossed the threshold of self-consciousness to a new mode of existence here referred to as immortal spirit. Here understood, Man is a unique being among beings; he is a being set apart, distinct from all the rest of nature and under divine injunction to gravitate towards the completion of God's creation. This is what Teilhard de Chardin thinks of Man and the world in which he lives when he says "by its radial nucleus it finds its shape and its natural consistency in gravitating against the tide of probability towards a divine focus of mind which draws it onward."³⁶

More compellingly, Man's over endowment as a creature of this earth and his surplus equipment for the adventure of his present life speaks volumes. If this life on earth is all that Man is and lives for, what need has he for all his mental faculties, moral aspirations, and spiritual ideals which move him to be distinctly a Man as contrasted with other beings? If existence upon the earth is his only destiny, why should man not prefer the swiftness of the deer, the strength of the lion and the vision of the eagle, to any endowment of the mind and heart, as more adequate provision for the purely physical task for survival in a physical world?. To outward appearance, Man disintegrates just like any animal. By death, in the animal, the radial is reabsorbed into the tangential, while in Man it escapes and is liberated from it. It escapes from entropy by turning back to Omega: the *hominization* of death itself.

We are convinced as the sages have argued that, Man's soul is made to transcend somaticity and so, man's soul is restless until it rests in the lord. Man is thus not a vain passion as Sartre stated, but a possible possibility, an image of God, a mode of the

³⁵ P. Edwards, *A Modern Introduction to Philosophy*, 173.

³⁶ Teilhard de Chardin, (1965), 271.

substance, incarnate spirit and utopic being. This conception of man may have informed Shakespeare's exclamation, thus,

What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason!

How infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable!

In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god!

The paragon of animals.³⁷ In death, Man leaps to the lord in anticipation for self-fulfillment of the Man project as lucidly captured the Asian wisdom literature. It states, *Asato ma sad Gamaya; Tama soma ma joytir Gamaya; Mrityor ma Amritam Gamaya.* (Lead me from the unreal to the real. Lead me from darkness unto light. Lead from death to immortality). In death therefore, Man changes and discontinues existence to continue existence from apparent nothingness to somethingness. The exhortation to fellow Athenians by Socrates "not to care for bodies and money before... how your soul will be the best possible,"³⁸ was no doubt an indication to the effect that, not only does he believe in the city's gods, but also in the existence of the soul as something not only distinct from the body, but that it is purified in wait for its continued existence after death. Such is the beauty of death that repeatedly and poetically chronicles that,

Death can be beautiful - when it gives release from suffering and pain. Death can be beautiful when it magnifies love through the comfort, the compassion and sympathy of friends and relatives. Death can be beautiful when it binds those yet living more closely together, when it revives memories of a life which in its totality displayed a richness of texture and a strength of design in which the selflessness, tenderness compassion

and generosity were merged. Death can be beautiful when in coming it opens the doors of life again - a life revealed in God's beyond and evermore. Death can be a gift, a reward, a promise fulfilled, the essence of God's love. The sorrow itself, which trails the wake of death, is a quality and measure of love that is creative in that it requires us to re-examine the values we hold. It causes us to question the validity of our lives; it opens our hearts to renewed appreciation of those whom we still have to love and underscores the possibility of unpredictable loss.³⁹

This much was the justified true belief of Socrates even as he was convicted to death. He asserts that, his labours to perfect the Athenian society shall never be in vain. He defends this position by asserting that his judges along with him, "should be of good hope toward death," because "there is nothing bad for a good man, whether living or dead, and that the gods are not without care for his troubles."⁴⁰ By this confession, Socrates, appears to be saying that, change, as it occurs in death, dissolves the body into nothing though, something continues to be; the soul (of a good man) experiences liberation from the body and continues its existence as a separate entity. This conclusion most obviously compels John Fiske to convincingly assert that, "I believe in the immortality of the soul as a supreme act of faith in the reasonableness of God's work". True there are postulations which suggest that all arguments in support of the immortality theory are based on assumption and that arguments based on assumption are inconclusive, without real evidence and may be false. It is indeed tempting to describe the immortality theory as make belief and last resort of believers who have

³⁷ quoted from Batista Munda, *Philosophical Anthropology* (1997), 187

³⁸ Ap. 30b

³⁹ Addie W. Williams

⁴⁰ Ap. 41c-d.

recognized the hopelessness of finding any evidence that the individual will persist beyond the grave.

But the mass evidence within human nature itself counts in favour of immortality. What man is in mind and heart and spirit, in the range of his interests and lift of his soul is proof that he is destined for something more. All that is precious in the world – all its beauty, its wonder, its meaning – exists in man and for man. The world is what man has done with it in the far reaches of his soul. And we are asked to believe that the being that sees and glorifies shall perish, while the world he has seen and glorified endures. Such a conclusion is irrational to say the least. Thus it is very reasonable to believe in immortality.

The Being that created the world must Himself be greater than the world. The soul which conceives truth, Goodness and beauty, must itself be as eternal as the truth, goodness and beauty which it conceives. It may be argued in conclusion here that what science has discovered about the conservation of energy is only the physical equivalent of what religion has discovered about the immortality of the soul. Robert Browning's poem, 'cleon' reveals this human fact thus:

...every day my sense of joy grows
more acute, my soul... enlarged more
keen, while everyday my hairs fall
more and more, my hand shakes, and
the heavy years increase, the harrow
quickenning still from year to year,
when I shall know most and yet least
enjoy. ... Imagine to (our) need. Some
future state...⁴¹

A similar desire for another life after death is captured by Tennyson:

Yet we trust that somehow good will
be the final goal of ill, to pangs of
nature, sins of will, defects of out and

taints of blood. That nothing walks
with aimless feet; that not one life
shall be destroyed or cast as rubbish to
the void, when God hath made the pile
complete... I stretch I am hands of
faith, and grope and gather dust and
chaff and call to what I feel is lord of
all. And faintly trust the large hope.⁴²

Although antagonists of immortality theory reject these poetic lines as the many unfruitful wishes of humanity, many people from the rudest to the most civilized yearn for another life, insisting that nature never creates a desire without providing the means for its satisfaction. Man, we may conclude, is equipped for this environment, and also for something more. What he is can only be explained on the supposition that he is preparing for another and a vaster life. Perhaps we may also reference the overwhelming conviction of John Holmes on this matter. In his words:

I have never seen any reason for
arbitrarily separation of our mind
from the companionship of other
mind. There is such thing, even for the
independent thinker, as a consensus
of best opinion which cannot be
defied without the weigh test of
reason. And in this matter of
immortality, there a consensus best
opinion which constitutes to my
mind, one of the most remarkable
phenomena in the whole history of
human thinking.⁴³

Thus, in agreement with great scientists like Aristotle, Darwin and Edenton, renowned philosophers like Plato, Kant and Bergson; erudite poets like Sophocles, Goethe, and Robert Browning; Touch – stone ethical teacher and public leaders like Socrates, Tolstoy and mahatma Gandhi, etc., we declare like Voltaire that, “reason agree with revelation... that the soul is immortal”, and so we need not trouble ourselves about the

⁴¹ R. Holmes, *Ten Reasons for believing in immortality* (1993), 256.

⁴² Ibid, 260.

⁴³ Ibid, 254.

manner of future existence, the power which gave existence is able to continue it in existence in any form.”⁴⁴ Interestingly, this form of existence is that which is also called the intelligible spiritual substance. John Locke makes a solid point in this regard by stating that, from the viewpoint of substance in general, spiritual substances are at least as intelligible as material substances.

Conclusion

Death and the question of existence and non-existence establish the long experienced struggle, metaphysically though that, what *is* and what is *not*, *being* and *nonbeing* is a necessary constituent of human existence. This struggle of metaphysical thought, the thought of *being* as somethingness and of nonbeing and nothingness, as absolutely not, does not in any way endanger the human desire of transcendence. In itself, Being and nonbeing are one and the same – Pure Being. Pure being as a product of transcendental imagination dissolves itself into nothing at death and, conversely results in something. The being of man and anything for that matter comes from nothing (*ex-nihilo*) and disappears into nothing and becomes something.

It is thus good logic to argue syllogistically in conclusion that, in nothing; by virtue of the dissolution of the body, man becomes something (in spirit). Nothing then is that which gives everything its mandate, meaning and pure existence or pure being. In the process of finite transcendence, man fulfils him/herself by becoming what he /she was not but which he/she earnestly desires to be; pure Being. In death, therefore, man transcends or goes beyond the given, the material, transient world, to the not-given, the spiritual world, he transits from the here and now (of tribal mindset, religious bigotry, hatred and

stealing and killing, to the not now (the immortal self). It is continuity by identifying the changing self with the changing world and thus overcoming the human sense-of-self and sense of separation from everything else.

This was truly the thinking of the great Socrates in his much trumpeted principle of paired opposites in which he says, “Whatever comes to be comes out of its opposites or a circle. Based on the paired theory, it therefore follows that life ends in death and death must give way to life”. Similarly, his theory of reminiscence talks about a feeling that we experience something before in the past life, recalled by our senses as ideas or forms. Death is just the separation of the soul from the body. Like ideas or form, the soul is indestructible and immortal. In death, change occurs and discontinuity appears though, there is continuity of the soul after its ultimate purification through knowledge and refrain from bodily pleasures. Socrates himself rhetorically queries, “...if a Man has trained himself throughout his life to live in state as close as possible to death, would it not be ridiculous to be distressed when death comes to him?”⁴⁵ In a change that involves the existence of Man from nothing in creation, life suffices.

In death, the body changes, and life dissolves into nothing and, Man becomes nothing. But in nothingness by virtue of consciousness and self-knowledge, the soul; the immortal spirit is liberated to become something. Therefore, in death, there is somethingness from nothingness. This most obviously explains why Socrates was not afraid to die or complained about his death sentence. In his convinced and justified true belief, Socrates believes that what lies behind us and lies before us are small matters compared to what lies within us (the soul) that continues to exist after us. In his

⁴⁴ Paul Edwards, 1973, 234.

⁴⁵ S. Ogungbemi, *God, Reason and Death: Issues in Philosophy of Religion* (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2008), 104.

existential state therefor, man is always pressing forward in death into the future as unfinished, *a not-yet, a no-thing and not yet a something*, but a forward directionality of life; a somethingness. Man's lack of totality signifies only that, there is something still outstanding in his potentiality-for being and that, nothingness in death is a potentiality for the *being* of man himself and a process onto actuality – continued existence of the soul...

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