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**The Problem of Mystery in Science and Technology: A
Philosophical Analysis**

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Abstract

When one talks about science, it is all about facts we know; technology is the practical products of science, but there are certain phenomena, occurrences or incidences that are beyond human comprehension, and therefore cannot be subjected to any empirical investigation. Such are called mysteries, for instance, the existence of God in itself is shrouded in mysteries. However, the problem is that today sciences use mysteries but deny that they do not have room for it. They are pretending because the entire theoretical framework of all scientists is not empirical. In this paper, we are establishing that we live in the middle of mysteries if we care to notice it, and we are surrounded by mysteries. Therefore, we need to be humble at the presence of the Supreme Being. But now the contemporary man because of science and technology thinks he/she knows everything which leads to pride and arrogance - the ills of our society. Our method is textual analysis; it is a critical look at the works written on mysteries in order to learn from the mysteries, since we cannot understand it all through reasoning and scientific experiments.

Key Words: Revelation, Mysteries, Science and Technology

Introduction

Generally, it is accepted that realities and truths in religion are accessible through revelation. But in philosophy this is not possible because human reasoning has limit. There are certain things which human understanding cannot comprehend. Ludwig Wittgenstein (1961) remarked: “what one cannot speak should remain silent” (p. 10). This means that the mystery of the existence of God and many others are beyond-rational thinking. Today, science and technology accept that they have an answer to every problem and this is problematic indeed. Since “I too know” leads one to pride and this is not good for a healthy society. However, there is no scientific projections that does not have metaphysical premises. In this work, we reflected on the concept of mystery and types of mystery; what is science and what is technology? The problem of mysteries in science and technology and then concluded.

What Is Mystery?

Etymologically, mystery comes from the Greek word “Musterion” meaning something secret. It can be defined as something that one cannot have an absolute knowledge of. It is that which man cannot understand or comprehend. In philosophy, mystery is that which one cannot reason about, one can only approach but cannot penetrate. But in theology, mysteries can be known in a little way through divine revelation. There are two fundamental principles from which all theological reflection on the nature of mystery must start and to which it must return. Rahner (1975) wrote:

Christian tradition has always attested to this experience of mystery. One should not think he can overcome the mystery of God by beatific vision. But one should rely on what will make us have perfect happiness when we are united with him in ecstatic love (p. 1001).

According to Rahner, in religion the existence of mystery is usually explained by man’s pilgrim state. In scholastic theology, we have mysteries in absolute sense and mysteries in a wider sense. The former are realities or statements which even when revealed cannot be fully understood in their essence or intrinsic possibility. The existence of the second kind of mysteries is not accessible to man when they are made known by revelation. Let discuss the types of mysteries.

Types of Mysteries

The kinds of mysteries are as follows: God, Life, Man, language, truth, love, evil and death.

The Mystery of God

The concept of God is very mysterious that one cannot understand it’ this is because our faculties cannot grasp it. Rahner opined:

It is possible on this basis to form a clear idea of what is really meant by mysteries of the concept of God. The mystery of all mystery is God. Indeed, God's incomprehensibility as God is the remote horizon on which existence moves. (Rahner, 1975, p. 1002).

What one understands from the above citation is that God is shrouded in mystery and on it the existence of the entire universe turns. Indeed, we know God by faith and when we encounter him, he communicates himself to us according to Rahner.

Today, we talk of the mystery of the Trinity. It is the way God manifests himself to us. Igwegbe (2002) described the most Trinity as "God the father who is love, and God is Grace (Son) and God who is fellowship (Holy Spirit)" (p. 107). Igwegbe also stated that the revelation of the truth is gradual. When God created all things out of nothing he revealed himself as the origin, meaning and dispense of love. The truth about the Trinity is that the one God reveals himself and operates in a plurality of persons and ways. Trinity means that God is a family of plurality of persons but unity of will, plurality of actions but one operation. Through the church is made up of different races, tribes, tongues and people as an image of the Trinity she has one father; and as a family held together by the Holy Spirit the church which is made up of many members with different temperaments and desires which have one single soul the Holy Spirit. The church as an image of the united trinity is continuously called to believe and bear witness to God with one heart.

Indeed, God created the world out of nothing and this is mysterious. In conclusion, we are surrounded by mysteries, the mystery of the conception of God, that of the three persons in one God and that of creating the world out of nothing.

The Mystery of Life

The mystery of life is that one sleeps at night and dies and in the morning one wakes up, it is beyond human understanding. Life is the only thing that has no make ups and no human being can control. Every other thing in this world has components but life does not. In life, only those who are wise in this world understand what is in the entrance and the exist of the life. At the beginning of life, a child cries, people cry for the death of the same person; what is common is the "cry" which means the nothingness of man or the emptiness of human life.

Again, what makes life a mystery is not the length of days but the donation of life. It is not the duration of one's life that matters but the sacrifice one has made is the most important thing. Indeed, life in itself has a great potential value even when it seems to have lost its usefulness or meanings.

The fact of existence draws a radical line of equality that transcends all differences in people. This makes other people's lives equally valuable as yours and mine. Alawa (2012) remarked: "Human life is mysterious because it possesses fundamental value.

The fact that existence being, the basic in human life justifies the proposition that life is a primary value” (p. 5).

The existence of life is the most fundamental because no one can create life except God, and no one has the right to take one’s life or that of another.

For Socrates, life is based on reflection and truth lies within each of us, not in the stars, tradition, religious books, or in opinions of masses. Each of us has within the hidden true principles of right thinking and acting. For Plato, in this mysterious world is to live a good life. The “Good” stands at the pinnacle of the cosmos of ideas. These ideas are responsible for securing the existence of other ideas and one has to live a virtuous life. Omoregbe (1993), reflecting on Plato said:

Only a virtuous man can be happy and Plato equates virtue with knowledge. A virtuous man is a wise man, a wicked man is foolish and ignorant. A man who does evil does not really know what he is doing, for no man does evil knowingly (p. 161).

For Plato, ignorance is the cause of wrong doings in the society. Virtue is the rational part of the soul. For Aristotle, human life is celebrated in happiness and virtue. He believes that a man is happy when he is at the middle of excess and lowest. For Epicurus, life has no purpose, no finality, everything happens by chance, and this chance is traceable to the movement of atoms. However, the epicureans believe that life is pleasurable.

In the medieval period, St. Augustine believes that life is all about happiness in the Lord. In the words of Augustine, “you have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in the Lord”. It means, only by returning to God that one can find happiness.

In the modern period, Thomas Hobbes believes that the mystery behind life is peace; and that all moral values are means of bringing peace. It is only in the atmosphere of peace that human beings can safely go back in the pursuit of the satisfaction of his interest. For Kant, life means do unto others what one will like others to do into him in all circumstances. For Friedrich Nietzsche, life has no standard values, each person can decide to make his own life style. Also for him, the mystery in this life is that life is meaningless- it has no purpose.

For the contemporary society, Heidegger stands out by saying that we live in mysteries; human being is a mystery, truth is a mystery, art and death are mysteries. Finally, Being is a mystery. Heidegger (1977) remarked:

A good life is when a man has learned to be “calm” when he no longer tries with the aid of science and technology to bend nature to his will,

only then will he be able to carry out his task as the “guardian of Being” (p.14).

According to Heidegger, this life is mysterious and we can only understand ourselves and solve our many problems through meditative thinking. For Sartre, life is mysterious only in freedom. It is only in freedom that mankind can manifest his/her potentialities. For him, freedom is a given. For Africans, life is not about the individual person but about the family, community and about God.

The Mystery of Man

Man is mysterious; he does not understand himself. Human beings are complex. He lives in a restless tension to completion because nothing created satisfies him. From the ancient period, Socrates says: “man know thyself” (Plato, 1988, p. 30). It means man should know his limits and also look deep into inner self so that he can control his anger, love, jealousy, hatred and should have a forgiven spirit.

Indeed, human beings are also wicked to his fellow brothers and sisters. Karl Jaspers (1965) remarked: “Man is a paradoxical being of prey, the cruellest animal earth has, the skin is cleared, one of its disease is called man” (p. 129).

In the same vein, Soren Kierkegaard was not silent about the mystery of man. He sees man as not to be whole out a part; for the existent individual is infinite relationship, his destiny is being clothed and endowed with the passion of freedom.

In another perspective, Teilhard de Chardin believes that man is part of evolution because man has the power to change things especially through language and auto-consciousness. In continuation, Cassirer says, whenever one finds a man we find in him the faculty of speech. So, language is not merely to point at things nor does it proceed from subjectivity through the sign to designate thing. The basic function of language is not restricted to particular applicability which encompasses the whole field of human thought. In fact, the difference between propositional and emotional language is the real landmark between the human and animal world.

The Mystery of Language

Language is mysterious because it is language that speaks man. The instrument that helps man to represent situation and objectivate himself is language. This level of representation is totally absent in animals according to Teilhard. However, what is language today is that it is the vehicle that conveys and portrays the culture of a particular society. It is a strong organ through which society transmit its heritage to its descendants. Titus (1979) echoed out:

Language is the Chief tool of the philosopher and the medium through which he finds expression. Consequently, the philosopher is sensitive to its ambiguities, defects and sympathetic to efforts to clarify and

improve it. In the twentieth century, the problems of language and communication and the function of signs and symbols has witnessed a growing interest (p. 304).

According to Titus, this interest has led to the development of semantics in language. Indeed, one of the important aspects of language is naming. One who does not know the name of the object in his hands will be asked to throw that away by his kindred because he could not give them the name. To avoid such an embarrassment, it is pertinent that he acquaints himself with the name of the object. What is naming? It is an early step in acquiring knowledge. A thing is known when one can name it; classify it, locate it in some meaningful context. If we wish to say something about a thing we need to name it so that we can distinguish it from other things.

According to Heidegger (1977), the word language is taken from the Greek word "Legin" which means "to speak" and "Logos" which is "speech" or "disclosure" Heidegger argued that this meaning is only a later development; that originally in Greek literature and philosophy, logos did not mean speech but "to gather" or "to collect". So, for him, language is a speaking that gathers, a gathering that reveals. What language gathers are beings in their totality. What is revealed in their rootedness and differentiation from Being. Originally, language is the disclosure of Being as the unconcealment in whose opening summoned beings into existence. Heidegger wrote "language speaks as the real of stillness" (Heidegger, 1977, p. 207) stillness here means more than soundlessness or absence of the audible. What is applied here is genuinely tranquil.

For Heidegger, language is one of the ways through which Being manifests itself as Being. People's understanding of the meaning of Being comes from their original language before it was watered down in their philosophy. Heidegger believes that it is through poetic language that Being speaks to man and not our everyday language. Heidegger was a poet. For him, the best language is silent.

According to Wittgenstein (1974), every proposition must capture reality, but he discovers that language has limit. Therefore, in his second book titled *Philosophical Investigations* he believes that language is like a game. And in order to play one must play by the rules. He wrote:

It is not the business of the philosopher to change the language of the people ... every proposition is meaningful when situated within the language game, where such proposition is used. (Wittgenstein, 1974, p. 243).

Today, all departments of studies have their own language. It is within their context that one can understand them according to their own perspective.

In summary, language is a mystery because man needs language and language needs men to speak. For Heidegger, the best language is silent, for Wittgenstein what one cannot speak about one should be silent. It is true because when difficulties happen to us in this world we do not know what to say.

The Mystery of Truth

The mystery about truth is that there will be a time in this world that no matter how one hides the truth one day one will use his own mouth to speak the truth. In different disciplines or departments of learning, progress in the pursuit of truth is accomplished in different ways by the employment of different method, and by resorting to different devices for correcting errors and expanding knowledge. Plato remarked: “Ordinary speech and opinion are liable to error and it is different from truth. For Plato, truths are the forms. According to Aristotle “truth is all about reality and judgment of reality (Aristotle, 1995, p. 11).

In the modern period, Rene Descartes sees truth as self-evident. For Kant, truth is found in experience and also in rational thinking. Hegel believe that truth is the agreement between motion and object, it is also all about the absolute spirit. For the analytic philosophers using Wittgenstein as an example, believe that truth is being referred to linguistic usage, the language game. Hans Gadamer was not silent about truth, he says truth is the combination of two sides of the stories; it is like a circle. For Heidegger, truth is “Aletheia” which means totality of truth and not any particular truth.

However, Africans are not forgotten in the mystery of truth especially traditional Igbo culture particularly in their proverbs: “Eziokwu dika onwa”- it means truth shines like the moon. “Eziokwu bu Ndu”- it means truth is life. ‘Eziokwu bu ka afoime” which means truth is like pregnancy. It cannot be hidden. We have different types of truth such as correspondence, coherent, pragmatic, consensus, performative and Alethea.

In summary, the better understanding of truth as a mystery is the combination of all these theories of truth since only one theory is not adequate enough to describe reality.

The Mystery of Art

One believes that art is a mystery because if one does not go to the artist to collect the artistic work, the artist will continue to work on it because as each day comes new inspirations will be coming. For Heidegger, art is not aesthetics. According to Heidegger, aesthetics is a science that deals with beauty and ugliness in nature and also in the work of arts in which we can perceive while art leads to Being. But before Heidegger, Plato says arts is in initiation of the third order; and all artists showed be banished from the society because they corrupt the society. But today art has a better understanding which is not initiation, beauty but is all about ontology and communication. For African, beauty is in the inside; they do not accept that beauty is the eyes of the beholder. They believe in good character and honesty. In our African

languages, we have the word “good” and not beautiful for art. For examples; for Ogoni-Lewa” – it means good wife for Ibos – “Wayi-Ona”, in Ijaw = “Ebiere, “in Efik = “Etionwa” all means good women. For African, when a woman has done her duty by caring for the entire family, no one knows whether she is one-eyed, or bad legs. What they know is the inside and that one is contended and useful for the family.

The Mystery of Love

What makes love mysterious is because all those one loves do not reciprocate the love. When we love and they love us back is the “missing” why should I miss you and I did not miss others. Here lies the mystery of love. When a man and woman fall in love they desire each other, but not the same way that they desire food or water. Human sexuality takes two directions, there is sex in the service of love, it seeks to realize itself in a union which involves knowing, understanding, compassion and self-sacrifice. For Christians, love is sacrifice, it means how much suffering one can offer for one another. We have three types of love; they are as follows: Eros, Philae and Agape. Erotic love is based on physical appearance and it is easily paves away. While Philia love is that love based on usefulness and for their sake. For Agape; this is true love based on God, it is unconditional. Corrento (1976) remarked: “To love somebody divinely, one must have an unending hope in him. It means to give that person’s credit for having more than we have found in him. Since hope is more important than despair” (p. 48).

It is on this agape love that Christian love is based on; it is on this Christ have the command, love one another just as I have loved you. Love is the greatest mystery. It comes when one least expected and disappears when one thinks it is here to stay. The heart that ignites it at the beginning is doused by intimacy it creates. Love is portal, a mirror, a cross to bear, a joy, a heart break and an axe. In summary, what makes it more mysterious is that the people one loves they do not know that one loves them; they do not respond but they love other people.

The Mystery of Evil

Evil is mysterious because it continues to embarrass human being from time to time; especially moral evil. The mystery about evil is that one has decided to stop evil but one still finds himself doing it. Today, the major problem is not that there is evil in the world but it is more attractive to people that goodness. Joyce (1984) remarked:

The existence of evil in the world is one of the problems that make human minds to reflect deeply on God and the world. If God is all powerful, how has evil any place in the world which he has made? Why did he allow it to arise? Why does He not defend us from the burden? (p. XVI)

The problem of evil has remained a recurring decimal in the philosophy of theodicy and it shows an apparent contradiction between reality of evil on one hand, and the

religious beliefs based on the goodness and omnipotence of God on the other hand, hence the challenge of the mystery of evil is still facing us in this world.

However, life is larger than logic even what we call “evil” is an integral part of the system and contribute mysteriously towards the order and harmony of the universal system of life. It means good cannot exist without evil as they are the exact opposite states. It means in a good man there are elements of evils, in a bad person he does some good actions. Evil is inherent in mankind and it takes the grace of God to do good for humanity. Let us reflect on the mystery of death.

The Mystery of Death

One of the most contemporary problems that loom large in the consciousness of man today as ever before is the mystery of death (Mysterium Mortis) what kills a man is death; it is the last enemy of man. It is a mystery because no one knows what it comes and no human being can control it. Heidegger (1962) subscribed to the ancient maxims: “to philosophize is to learn how to die”. Heidegger confirmed it, when he said: “Death is a way to be, which human beings takes over as soon as it is; as soon as man comes into life, he is once old enough to die” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 289). According to Heidegger the mystery about death is that it is a way of life any person can die at any time which means there is no immortality of the youth. For Christians, death is not the end of man but a birthday to Heaven. According to Jean- Paul Sartre death is absurd, this is because it robs all the potentialities man has. Let us discuss what is science?

What Is Science?

Science comes from the Latin word “scientia” which means to know, it means whatever is known is a science. Before the modern period philosophy (metaphysics) is known as the science of all sciences. In the modern period, Kant said metaphysics cannot be a science since the subject matter cannot be verifiable and it cannot be investigated empirical but it can only be possible as a natural disposition.

In the contemporary society, the word “science” which generally refers to knowledge has somehow been restricted to the applied sciences. That is knowledge that deals with concrete facts. Some of these applied sciences have practical values. It is the practice of these category of applied sciences that is referred as technology.

However, technology itself has a history of its own. In the early Greek period, the word is derived from “techne” and “logos” which means a discourse on both fine and applied art. Later in the seventeenth century, it came to mean both fine and applied arts only. Furthermore, in the first part of this century it referred not only to tools and machines but also ideas, means and process. Today, it has come to be understood as “Means or activities by which man seeks to change and manipulates his environment” (Rahner, 1975, p. 1543). To this effect tools are developed his use. Their tools are ideas and

concepts which existence. Consequently, the immaterial is materialized. At this level, utility is primarily emphasized.

In another perspective, what we call science today uses inductive method, from particular to general application of things. They also move around to collect datas, which they use for their experiments. Indeed, when scientists discover that one particular product they produced is not active enough they change to another, which they call paradigm shift. Let us now discuss what is technology?

What is Technology?

Technology itself has a long history of its own. In the early Greek period, the word technology is derived from two Greek words “techne” and “logos” referring to discourse on both fine and applied arts. Later in the seventh century, it came to mean both the discourse and practice of applied arts only. In the first part of the twentieth century, it is referred not only to tools and machines but also to ideas, means and processes.

However, in more recent years, it has become means or activities by which man seeks change or manipulates his environments. To this effect, tools are developed by man for use. These tools which are ideas and concepts existed only mentally, and now have attained physical and practical existence. Consequently, the immaterial is materialized. At this level, utility is primarily emphasized. Indeed, some of the applied sciences have practical values. It is the practice of this category of applied sciences that is referred to as technology.

The Problem of Mystery in Science and Technology

The problem is that in our contemporary society, science and technology use mystery but deny that they do not have room for it. This is because with science and technology, modern man thinks that he knows everything. For example, what one does not know one keys into his computer and gets the answer or solution to his problems. Therefore, contemporary man believes that he has answers to all the problems of life and this is problematic because it leads to pride and arrogance which are the ills of the society.

However, sciences use mysteries because what is myth yesterday is today a science, scientists pretend that they are not using mystery, they forget that the ideas, concepts and theoretical frame work of their method is mystery. Let us look at their Axiomatic Theory: Investigation of the foundations of mathematics and science raise the question of the basic meaning and validity of scientific proposition rest. Since the validity of propositions which are denied from other proposition is dealt with in logic, logical analysis is indispensable. Nowadays, the techniques of modern logic are used in sciences.

Indeed, in the area of “Ta mathematic Ka” – (of mathematics) for examples $4 + 4 = 8$, $8 + 8 = 16$, no one has seen four and sixteen walking on the surface of the earth but we all agree that these numbers are true when we use it in scientific calculations but we have not seen it physically, therefore it is axiomatic.

In the area of architecture, there is no building elected without a plan, this plan is not seen physically but technological advancement without a metaphysical premise. Sciences use mysteries and pretend that it does not exist, even the strict application of the principle of verification brings difficulties, general statements of laws are in principle impossible to verify completely. According to Karl Popper, all we require of sciences by way of test is that they should make possible exact predictions. It means the theory of science called the theory of verification cannot verify itself and this is a mystery.

However, in this work, we are establishing that we live in the middle of mysteries if we care to notice it and we are surrounded by mysteries. It means mankind needs to be humble and stop judging others so that one will not be judged; we should learn the good things from one another and to make the society a better place.

Conclusion

Mystery is what one cannot understand or comprehend what we know and we can explain is science. What we are correcting in this work is that science and technology use mystery and pretend and also deny that mysteries do not exist in science. But we know that mystery surround all of us if we care to know Heidegger even said: “the essence of language is a mystery” (Heidegger, 1961, p. 144). The mystery about life is that it has no component, the mystery about man is that he is a complex being that does not know himself. About truth, the mystery is that one uses him/her own mouth to say the truth no matter how many years it was concealed. The mystery about love is that those we love do not know that we love them, they are busy loving others. Even when one loves it is the “missing” that is the mystery because one cannot “mis” everybody at the same time. The mystery of evil means that the innocents suffer and what one wants to stop is what he continues to do. Moral evil, one keeps on doing it, it means evil is inherent in man, it takes the grace of God for man to do good to humanity.

Finally, the mystery of death is that it comes when one does not know; and human beings have no control over it, it kills the scientist, the philosopher and all others.

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