

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**  
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**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**

**AN EXPOSITORY DISCUSSION ON WIREDU'S  
EPISTEMOLOGY AND HIS CRITICAL SUGGESTION ON  
SOME "EPISTEMOLOGICAL" MATTERS**

**BY**  
**KIFLE MIDAGDU KALACHA**

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**ADDIS ABABA**

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## INTRODUCTION

In the intellectual scene or arena, generally speaking, it is commonly believed that all intellectuals, scientists, and other practitioners of several fields of study are concerned with knowledge but only philosophers are concerned with knowledge as such.

In this contention I am not, obviously speaking, saying that the practitioners in question are people who do not care about, and hence, are less concerned with the production and transmission of knowledge. But my point rather is that even though they claim to know something about the world that surrounds us, and even beyond that, it can be certainly enunciated that it is primarily the business of philosophers to question and attempt to offer an answer to such fundamental epistemological problems as the meaning of knowledge, its source or how we acquire knowledge of certain things, etc.

Subsequently, this is a moment in which one fundamental field of philosophical study, namely epistemology, has to be invited to our attention for it has mainly made its business such issues related to knowledge. All the issues I raised above somehow are meant to elucidate why I have become interested in the study of epistemological issues and also serve as a background of my further studies. The discussions made, moreover, lay the foundation for my thesis designated as *'An Expository Discussion on Wiredu's Epistemology and His Critical Suggestions on Some "Epistemological" Matters.'*

Therefore, particularly speaking, in the course of my entire exposition and critical reflection, one will hopefully note that I am primarily concerned with the epistemological aspects of Wiredu's philosophy, and hence it is in the light of his view of knowledge that I would like to treat the epistemological concerns of other philosophers such as St. Anselm, St. Thomas Aquinas, and Rene Descartes regarding God's existence, and George Berkeley's doctrine of 'esse est percipi.'

This study has three main parts or chapters, and concluding remarks. Chapter one of the study chiefly devotes itself to one central preoccupation, namely the concept of truth in Wiredu. However, before I directly get down to see Wiredu's view of truth, I wish to begin my exposition with problematising the concept of truth (i.e., its nature or determining its meaning or what its

definition is all about) and the general and sure or sufficient criterion of truth ( i.e., the determination of its criterion).

In connection to this, I would like to consider various scholars or schools of thought that have developed their own positions in relation to defining the notion of truth and determining its criterion. Here I will discuss some of the central arguments of, among others, the three most accredited philosophical theories of truth, namely the correspondence, the coherence, and the pragmatic theories. In a course of the discussions of these theories, I will try to depict Wiredu's critical reviews on some ideas of them, particularly that of the correspondence theory of truth. My kernel point here is that an exposition of these theories will serve as a background for my further studies of Wiredu's view of truth.

Now, let us come back to Wiredu's view of truth, which is the central preoccupation of chapter one of my research. A Ghanaian philosopher, Kwasi Wiredu (1931- ), clearly states that truth is nothing over and beyond opinion. This thesis indicates, it seems to me, that there is nothing called truth as distinct from opinion. Because our conventional understanding of the two concepts (i.e., truth and opinion) in philosophy is that they are essentially different, at least in terms of their degrees of certainty, and thus, since Wiredu's notion of truth seems to stand opposed to our usual, conventional conception of the concepts in question, it sounds very unique to our knowledge. In this regard, Wiredu himself is very much aware of such difficulty and subsequently states it is a highly controversial view as he knows from experience. Therefore, having realized that this view will appear so difficult and controversial to many, Wiredu devotes, Part III of his work *Philosophy and an African Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1980), to the clarification of his view of truth. Consequently, chapter one of my study chiefly aims at the exposition, discussion, and defense of his advanced thesis that 'truth is nothing but opinion.'

Furthermore, Wiredu is not oblivious to the connection between language and truth, and subsequently, he calls for the need to consider a significant connection between questions of truth and meaning in the philosophical analysis. For him, truth presupposes meaningfulness. Likewise, Jurgen Habermas focuses upon the existence of an inextricably intertwined connection between language and truth. Thus, 'a pragmatic theory of meaning' is one of the chief

philosophical achievements of Habermas, in which he tries to demonstrate the availability of a connection between the concepts of truth and meaning. I can thus claim that both Wiredu and Habermas emphasize an inescapably intimate connection between the two notions. Therefore, in this paper I wish to expose and compare the two philosophers' conceptions of meaning with particular reference to truth.

In chapter two, my discussions will be mainly directed towards the questions pertinent to knowledge of God's existence. Thus, this section shall contain issues that can be possibly posed in the philosophy of religion. The questions, among other things, of knowing whether God exists have become very central in the philosophy of religion. In this connection, there have been a good number of philosophers who put forward their own arguments for the conception of God's existence. These include St. Augustine, St. Anselm, St. Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, Pascal, Berkeley, and many other philosophers.

However, though there have been so many philosophers who have developed their own arguments to prove the existence of God, I have decided to select only some of them, namely St. Anselm, St. Thomas Aquinas, and Rene Descartes whom I consider to be useful for the purpose of my discussion. Here, what I primarily intend to do will be to expose the arguments advanced by these philosophers, and finally I would like to critically react to their conceptions of knowledge of God's existence by using the implications of Wiredu's conception of knowledge of existence in general.

In this regard, Wiredu himself pointed out that St. Anselm, and later, Descartes had argued that the existence of God is logically bound up with the correct conception of God. Furthermore, St. Thomas Aquinas, who attempted to provide five proofs or ways for God's existence, would seem to consider or view the issue of understanding the existence of God in reference to God's sensible effects, things we can observe. Here we can note that Aquinas is different from both Anselm and Descartes in his conception of proving God's existence in that the former believes that the existence of God is not self-evident to us (though it is self-evident to God Himself), since we cannot know the essence of God.

Meanwhile, according to Wiredu, to claim to know that God exists has logically nothing to do with the correct conception of God or, in my view, with reference to God's sensible, physical

effects. And thus, in this respect, I would like to employ the implications of Wiredu's idea of existence to critically evaluate the arguments formulated by Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, and Descartes because for Wiredu, unlike these philosophers, to assert the existence of God is to assert that the term God has a reference or refers to a certain object. This position will therefore be developed in my study.

In chapter three, I will devote my study primarily to an expository discussion on Wiredu's epistemology. This section thus shall partly cover the central objective of the research. Accordingly, in this respect, the main purpose of the thesis will be to explicate Wiredu's conception of knowledge of the existence, particularly of a material object or thing. In connection to this conception, I would like to critically evaluate George Berkeley's famous doctrine of 'esse est percipi' or 'to be is to be perceived' in the light of Wiredu's epistemological thesis that 'to be is to be known.'

In his major epistemological thesis 'to be is to be known', Wiredu attempts to show the relation between knowledge and existence. Consequently, for him, existence is not logically bound up with the correct conception or knowledge of the attributes of an object or a thing. So, for him, to assert that an object exists is to assert that a given term refers to an object. This notion of the relation between the concepts of knowledge and existence will therefore be expanded and briefly discussed in this section.

As I have already pointed out, after I have briefly explained Wiredu's conception of existence, the task that immediately follows will be to treat Berkeley's philosophical doctrine of 'to be is to be perceived' in the light of Wiredu's epistemological position. Here, the main task of this study will therefore be an attempt to demonstrate or show Wiredu's effort to make critical suggestions on Berkeley's doctrine because, according to Wiredu, in the questions of the existence of sensible objects, Berkeley would seem to conflate the epistemological thesis and the ontological one when he states that 'to be is to be perceived.' Hence for Wiredu these theses need to be separated. Finally, I would like to recapitulate my study by providing some major concluding remarks.

# CHAPTER ONE

## TRUTH IN WIREDU

### 1.1 The Theories of Truth

As a part of epistemic issues, raising and discussing what the concept of truth is or can be is both fundamental and indispensable. This question has been posed by many philosophers and other intellectuals. Thus, there are several schools of thought that have developed the criterion of establishing and conceiving truth. This activity, however, is not an easy task. Wiredu expresses this difficulty by stating: “*The question of the nature of truth is, in fact, a particularly tricky but fundamental topic in epistemology (or the theory of knowledge), the branch of philosophy which considers such notions as perception, truth, belief, opinion, observation, memory, knowledge, illusion, verification.*”<sup>1</sup>

We can thus observe that the topic of truth, though difficult, is an integral part of the theory of knowledge (or epistemology). I also believe that when we claim to have knowledge of something, our claim is tantamount to knowing what the truth of that thing is, i.e., what is the case about that thing in Wiredu’s terms. But still the difficulty lies in determining what the concern about truth and its criterion are all about.

In this regard, F. L. Will in his work *Pragmatism and Realism* (1997), attempts to present the concerns of Ernest Nagel and Richard B. Brandt (eds.) in the work *Meaning and Knowledge* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963, p. 121) as well as that of G. Pitcher (ed.), in the work *Truth* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1964, P.1) about truth. Consequently, he describes that in their *ontology* in the theory of knowledge, Nagel and Brandt open the discussion of the topic of truth with the observation: “*Although the pursuit of knowledge is often used to be a “search for truth,” those engaged in it are rarely concerned with the nature of the alleged object of their search. Certainly few investigators ... have devoted much thought to defining what truth is.*”<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Pitcher begins the introduction of his *Collection of Contemporary Articles on Truth* with the observation that “... *although the concept of truth, the*

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<sup>1</sup> See Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), P.153.

<sup>2</sup> See F.L. Will, *Pragmatism and Realism* edited by Kenneth R. Westphal with a Foreword by Alasdair MacIntyre (Lanham, Boulder, New York and London: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1997), p.40.

*meaning of the term “truth” is a concern of philosophers, “the great philosophers of history (i.e., the great historical figures) said surprisingly little about this concept: they were far more interested in truths than in truth.”<sup>3</sup>*

Here, it is evident that the topic of truth is not well addressed by the investigators. This seems to happen due to the fact of the problematic nature of determining the nature of truth. In the immediately above-quoted statements we can see that the great philosophers in history were far more interested in truths than in truth. This expression illuminates the divergent views developed by the investigators pertaining to the notion of truth. This helps us to explain the frustration one often experiences in pursuing many discussions of the topic, the feeling somehow being that though much energy or effort has been expended, the main issues of truth remain disagreeable among many scholars. Furthermore, as I have attempted to point out a general criterion of truth itself is another problematic issue.

In this respect, Wiredu tries to make explicit how Kant long ago expressed himself on the question ‘what is truth?’, and the difficulty pertinent to determining a general criterion of truth as indicated below:

*The nominal (or verbal) definition of truth, that is, the agreement of knowledge with its object, is assumed as granted; the question asked is as to what is the general and sure criterion of the truth of any and every knowledge ... [Kant’s own answer as to ‘what the criterion is’ is that]..., a general criterion of truth must be such as would be valid in each and every instance of knowledge, however their objects may vary. It is obvious, however, that such a criterion (being general) cannot take account of the varying content of knowledge (relation to its specific object). But since truth concerns just this very content, it is quite impossible, indeed, absurd, to ask for a general test of the truth of such content. A sufficient and at the same general criterion of truth cannot possibly be given.”<sup>4</sup>*

Wiredu herein tries to elucidate the problem inherent in a discussion of the philosophical theory of truth, and that of a sufficient and at the same time general criterion of truth by using Kant’s expression given in the above passage. Whether this position was retained by Kant throughout his philosophical career or not, I am not sure. However, Wiredu strongly emphasizes the passage put forward, in the above quotation, by Kant to be extremely useful in showing clearly what a

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> See *Critique of Pure Reason*, Trans. N. Kemp Smith, PP. 97-98 quoted in Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, 1980, PP. 153-154.

philosophical theory of truth is not and cannot be. On this point, Wiredu expresses in his own terms: “...*In offering a theory of truth a philosopher is not seeking to teach fresh language learners how to use the word ‘true’ in the English language (or the corresponding word in any given language). Nor could he possibly be proposing a ‘sufficient and at the same time general criterion of truth.’ On the absurdity of such a programme Kant has most likely said the last word*”.<sup>5</sup>

Be that as it may, generally speaking, the activity of determining what the notion of truth is all about, including its criterion, is very problematic. Hence, though several scholars or philosophers as well as schools of thought have pointed out their own views as to what these issues can be, there has been no unanimity among the views and methods held by them. Therefore, the great philosophers of history have had very diverse and often divergent views about truth.

In consequence, Idoniboye in the Journal *Truth and Reality in African Thought* questions the correct view of accredited Western theories of truth. The point thus is: “...*Is the correct view of truth that which regards it as a sort of correspondence of something with reality, or that which sees it as cohering in the whole body of knowledge and belief, or that which defines it as pragmatic.*”<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the correspondence, the coherence, and the pragmatic theories are the most widely held theories of truth by many philosophers. My task here will be to expose, and in some cases, criticize these more generally known Western theories in some detail. I would like to begin with the correspondence theory of truth. In this connection, one had better recall that many philosophers have contributed to the inception and development of the theory. However, from my readings I am able to see, principally, that the phrase ‘correspondence theory of truth’ has become popular through the writings of Bertrand Russell. Wiredu also tells us that it is Bertrand Russell who propounded at an early stage in his *Philosophical odyssey* the purport of the correspondence theory that provides a picturesque illustration of its version.

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<sup>5</sup> Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African culture*, 1980, P. 154. See 1.2 of this chapter in order to somehow understand or construe how I tried to discuss Wiredu’s view of truth.

<sup>6</sup> See D.E. Idoniboye, “Truth and Reality in African Thought” in *Proceedings of the Seminar on African Philosophy* by C. Sumner (ed.) (Addis Ababa: Chamber Printing Press, 1-3 Dec. 1976), P.94.

Having said this, let us proceed to see the central theme of this theory. As pointed out by Idoniboye's expositions, this theory fundamentally insists on "*(the) correspondence of something with reality.*"<sup>7</sup>

In the course of my discussions, I have realized that a question arises when it comes to the issue of what is that something which corresponds to reality? Consequently, a number of philosophers have attempted to provide their own reactions as to what corresponds to reality or fact. For some philosophers such as Russell that something which corresponds to reality is said to be belief. Others also have different views in that it is a sentence or statement which corresponds to reality. Some others still hold that what does the corresponding is a proposition, a judgment, an assertion, and the like as mentioned in the discussions of Idoniboye.

Hence, Idoniboye describes the way Russell and some other philosophers maintain the correspondence theory of truth as indicated below:

*...(For Russell) truth consists in some form of correspondence between belief and fact... against the theory of the absolute idealists who hold that truth consists in coherence, that is, that the more our beliefs hang together in a system, the truer they are... Other philosophers (such as Wilson) put it differently: A sentence or statement is true if and only if what it says corresponds to the facts, or reality ... (Still for) G.E. Moore the bearers of truth and falsity, i.e., the things that are true or false, are propositions or beliefs, both of which are entities existing in the world. To say that a belief is true is to say always that the fact to which it refers is or has being, while to say of a belief that it is false is to say always that the fact to which it refers is not or has no being... The relation of reference between a belief and a fact is called correspondence.*<sup>8</sup>

As I have already pointed out, all these philosophers have somehow attempted to give their own answers to the question of what is that which corresponds to reality. However, we need not forget that though there may be several answers to this question, the central thesis of the correspondence theory of truth is the correspondence of something with reality. Remember here that the aim of my discussions is not to determine what exactly corresponds to the facts but

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., In his footnotes p. 95, Idoniboye suggests to see (1) Bertrand Russell. "Truth and Falsehood", in *Problems of philosophy*, London: O.U.P., 1967, P. 70, (2) Susan Wilson, *Truth*, Bletchley, Buks: The open University Press, 1973, P. 10, (3) G.E. Moore 'Beliefs and Propositions' in *Some Main Problems of Philosophy*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1953, p.8.

simply to expose various views held by some philosophers about the theory. But later on I will attempt to examine particularly the claim of this theory on the basis of Wiredu's analysis.

In this connection, let us see another version of the notion of correspondence. In his work *Pragmatism and Realism* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, and London: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1997, Kenneth R. Westphal (ed.), a writer by the name Will quotes Hegel in the very first page of his discussions of truth and correspondence. He thus depicts:

*For the truth...(consists in)this: not that external things correspond with my representations ( Vorstellungen )– these are only correct representations held by me the individual person-but that the **objectivity** ( i.e., the essence, apprehended in thought, of the existing thing ) corresponds with the **concept** ( Begriff ) (the developed conception of it as fully rational, actual, real ) ... Truth in the deeper sense consists in the identity between the objectivity and the concept -Hegel<sup>9</sup>*

We can see that Hegel as expressed by Will tries to develop a different version of a theory of truth. In our previous discussions, what corresponds with reality may be either belief, or statement, or proposition, or judgment, and so on. But in the case of Will's expression of Hegel there is no such thing as those mentioned above. He rather conceives truth in terms of the correspondence or identity between the objectivity and the concept. Thus it seems to me that Hegel's notion of truth is, as far as this case is concerned, very different from that of Russell, Moore, and other philosophers.

Now, we happen to see how Wiredu construes, and thus attempts to present a general notion of the correspondence theory of truth. According to Wiredu's view:

*...In fact, the correspondence theory of truth seeks to set up a realm of facts as an ontological order distinct from the realm of statements and entities such as trees and houses. According to this theory, there are facts which mirror the import of those statements that are true. A statement may be about a tree, but the fact which makes it true would not itself be a tree. Let the statement be: "The tree is tall." Then the fact which makes it true, if it is true, is the state of affairs that the tree is tall. The state of affairs in this case is not the tall tree but an apparently complex entity which contains elements corresponding to the tree, the tallness and the 'is' which subsists between the two. The statement is true if it agrees with this complex entity point for point.<sup>10</sup>*

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<sup>9</sup> F.L. Will, *Pragmatism and Realism*, 1997, P. 21.

<sup>10</sup> Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, 1980, P. 154.

Wiredu seems to enunciate that the theory tends to draw a certain ontological distinction between a fact and a statement. He states that to give something ontological status is to bestow on it a nature and type of existence. And some proponents of this theory interpret facts in this ontological manner. This means that the nature of facts may be said to be interpreted in an ontological order. So, facts are given an ontological status in the correspondence view of truth. For instance, in the quotation just stated above, it is stated that ‘the tree is tall.’ According to this theory, Wiredu argues, what makes this statement true is the state of affairs that the tree is tall. Wiredu wants us to imagine that as the referent of such a statement there is a realm or ‘states of affairs’ distinct from the tree and statements about it. This notion is thus metaphysical according to Wiredu.

In this connection, Wiredu repeatedly points out that, “... *when certain philosophers reject the correspondence theory it is not the idea of fact that they oppose but its metaphysical transcendence.*”<sup>11</sup> Let us now consider certain difficulties identified by Wiredu in the correspondence theory. He asks: “... *First of all, there is the problem of how a statement as a whole can be said to refer at all.*”<sup>12</sup> The idea here is, according to the theory, that it is a statement as a whole that refers. We have already seen that what makes the statement ‘The tree is tall’ true is the state of affairs which involves a complex entity. This complex entity includes elements corresponding to the tree, the tallness and the ‘is’. Therefore, we can see that the statement ‘The tree is tall’ is said to be true if it agrees with this complex entity point for point as Wiredu suggests. Thus, it can be said that a statement as a whole refers. Wiredu identifies this as one of the difficulties pertinent to the correspondence theory. And he rejects this claim that a statement as a whole can be said to refer.

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.156.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

Against this aspect of the correspondence theory, Wiredu states:

*A statement always contains a finite verb which gives it its assertive character ... Let us [see] our example: 'The tree is tall.' It is agreed on all hands that if this statement is true, a certain particular use of the term 'the tall tree' will have a reference. But here it is not the statement as a whole that refers but what we might call its ideational content, namely the idea: 'the tall tree.' Further, the referent is not a fact but a tall tree. Indeed, the whole message of the assertion, 'the tree is tall' is that the ideational content has a reference. Obviously making the referential claim is the function of the assertive element.<sup>13</sup>*

Here we can observe that Wiredu stresses what he calls the ideational content of a given statement against the claim that it is a statement as a whole that refers. In consequence, the ideational content of the statement 'the tree is tall' is the idea: 'tall tree.' And the assertion that 'the tree is tall' provides us with the information that the ideational content has a reference. Besides, Wiredu tries to state that the referent, in our case, is a tall tree rather than what one might call a fact.

In relation to the question of referent, Wiredu states:

*... If one should now comment: 'But when the tree is, in fact, tall, is not there a fact that the tree is tall?' The answer is: 'Exactly so. The fact in question is that the tree is tall, i.e., that the ideational content has a reference.' If the one who asserts that the claim that the tree is tall is a fact is talking responsibly, then the presumption is that he has made the necessary inspection. All that we have here, then, is the coincidence of the propositional results of two confrontations with the environment. On this showing, a fact is nothing but a confirmed claim. Any feeling that in rejecting the transcendent conception of facts one is cutting off the anchorage in reality can thus be dispelled at once: the claim which is said to be confirmed in the given case is confirmed only by an observation of a tree- a part of the furniture of the real world.<sup>14</sup>*

This makes clear one of the difficulties supposedly inherent in the correspondence theory. Additionally, Wiredu suggests that there is a further difficulty in the correspondence theory. This one has to do with the notion of the reference, or particularly, of a belief.

Hence he states the problem just like this:

*... [In] the correspondence theory..., in raising the question of truth one starts with a belief antecedently formed and then wonders whether this belief 'refers' or*

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., PP 156-157.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., P. 157.

*'corresponds' to a fact. But this is quite clearly putting the cart before the horse, methodologically speaking. A rational man does not first form a belief and then ask for the evidence in support of it. On the contrary, in facing a problem one starts with an idea, a tentative proposal, as is the practice in all scientifically accredited inquiry... Truth-claims enter into the picture only at the close of an inquiry; they indicate the attainment of warranted judgment. It is therefore absurd, given an identical point of view, to ask 'when is a belief true?' and to answer 'when it corresponds to fact' is to give an absurd answer to an absurd question. The proper question is: 'when is an "idea" true?' and the answer implicit in these reflections is 'when it becomes the ideational content of a warranted judgment.'*<sup>15</sup>

We have previously noted that the central theme of this theory insists on something's corresponding with reality or fact. And the question arises as to what this something is or can be. For some thinkers, such as Russell it is a belief that corresponds to reality. Here the point that is in question is whether we antecedently form a belief and then proceed to search for any supporting reasons or evidence for the already established belief. This procedure is nonsense according to Wiredu's argument. Wiredu, in my opinion, maintains that one should not have a belief antecedently formed and then continue to ask whether this belief corresponds to reality, only to judge that if this belief corresponds to reality it is true, and if it fails to correspond or refer to reality it is false. Wiredu especially stresses the absurdity of the question given an identical *point of view*.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, in facing a given problem, Wiredu advises us to start with a certain idea and then question whether it can become the ideational content of a warranted judgment (or a warranted assertibility). Therefore, here I can easily realize that for Wiredu there is a fundamental distinction between an idea (which is conceived by Wiredu to be a tentative proposal) and a belief.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp. 157-158.

<sup>16</sup> The concept of point of view is crucial for Wiredu in his analysis of truth. We shall see it in the next part.

Lastly, Wiredu yet tries to identify another difficulty in the correspondence theory of truth. He presents:

*...Suppose that, against all good sense, a man were to embrace a proposition and only afterwards try to see whether it 'corresponds' to fact. How is he to set about it? Should he try to find reasons to justify or evidence to support the proposition? But in this way he can only arrive at a warranted assertion if he is successful. And yet what we are looking for is a fact over and above a warranted judgment which is to confer truth on the assertion. Clearly...there is nothing further to do after reaching a fully grounded belief. To compare a warranted assertion with a fact is thus a totally mysterious activity.<sup>17</sup>*

Thus, Wiredu is able to identify and reflect on certain difficulties that may be experienced in the correspondence theory of truth. Among others, he states that there is the problem of how a statement as a whole is said to refer at all. For him, what matters is not the statement as a whole that refers but the ideational content of a statement which gives it its assertive character.

He also remarks that a person with rational point of view cannot be expected to antecedently form certain belief and then try to find reasons to justify whether this belief 'refers' or 'corresponds' to a fact. As to him, this activity is not advisable; and even he regards such activity as it sounds like putting the cart before the horse. This is methodologically incorrect. I think that, according to him, one should not search for any kind of further fact once he formed certain belief. That is why he argues that as far as methodological inquiry is concerned, there is nothing further to do after reaching a belief. What we are rather expected to do, in facing a certain problem, is to start with forming an idea, or a tentative proposal, and then try to arrive at some sort of belief.

Having pointed out this much in regards to the correspondence theory, let us now come to see the coherence theory of truth. Wiredu, in this regard, states that the coherence and pragmatist theories of truth are usually given as the alternatives to the correspondence theory. Some thinkers try to argue that the coherence theory of truth can be traced back to the great rationalist system-building metaphysicians. Among others, Leibniz, Spinoza, Hegel and Bradley are well-known rationalist system-building metaphysicians, and it is believed that this theory is endemic in their thoughts. The theory is also said to have influenced the thinking of some of the logical positivists

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid.,p.158.

like Otto Neurath and Carl G. Hempel. As it is commonly held by many proponents of this theory, truth is regarded as coherence.

Wiredu presents this theory as follows: “*A pithy formulation of this theory is given in the maxim: Truth is coherence. Truth, according to this view, lies not in any relation between a statement and an independent realm of being but in its harmonious fit with the received system of knowledge.*”<sup>18</sup>

Here we can observe that the conception of truth, according to the coherence theory, is to consist in its harmonious coherence with our already accepted system of knowledge. Mind you! the correspondence theory consists in setting up a realm of facts as an ontological order distinct from the realm of statements and particular entities. In my opinion, comparatively speaking, the coherence theory does not consist in establishing a realm of facts with an ontological status distinct from the realm of statements. As we can see in Wiredu’s exposition, for this theory, truth lies in its harmonious fit with the received system of knowledge. Therefore, I think that there is a certain difference between the two theories of truth.

Idoniboye, moreover, states the view of the coherence theory in this sense:

*...To say that a statement, oftener than not called a judgment, is true or false means no more than to say that it coheres or fails to cohere with a system of other statements; that it is a member of a system whose elements are related to each other by ties of logical implication as the elements in a system of pure mathematics are related.*<sup>19</sup>

As we can see, the notion of coherence is situated at the central part of the arguments. Wiredu makes the point that this fit or coherence is not an easy task to define. It may be supposed that one relates coherence to mere logical consistency. Wiredu, however, does not seem to confine the notion of coherence to purely logical consistency alone though consistency, of course, is presupposed. He, in this regard, argues that, “... *If (coherence were to be identified with mere logical consistency), the theory would be unthinkably absurd, for any whimsical proposition will be consistent with some potentially infinite set of propositions. Consistency is presupposed, of*

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., P.159.

<sup>19</sup> D.E. Idoniboye, “Truth and Reality in African Thought,” in *Proceedings of the Seminar on African Philosophy* edited by Sumner, 1-3 Dec. 1976, P.97.

course, but something more is involved.”<sup>20</sup> So, it is evident that Wiredu seems to dispense with an attempt to define coherence solely in terms of mere logical consistency.

Thus, Wiredu calls for the involvement of something else more than mere logical consistency and he thus relates coherence to reasonableness as stated below:

*...Coherence is nothing but reasonableness...; a suggestion is reasonable to the degree to which it can be supported by rational investigation. Thus to say of a claim that it coheres with our system of knowledge is to say that it is warrantably assertible. What the new proposition has in common with our antecedent 'knowledge' is substantiation by the method of rational investigation. Indeed, it is this method which gives system to the bits of information and deductions which we call our knowledge. Moreover, it is only in virtue of this consideration that we can explain how a new development may lead to large-scale revision of previously accepted conceptions. Various bits of putative knowledge may fall, but the method itself stands. For this reason, the coherence theory is strictly to be understood as saying, not that truth is what coheres with our knowledge-which would be circular in any case, since knowledge involves truth-but rather that which coheres with our system of beliefs.<sup>21</sup>*

So, for him, coherence, in addition to logical consistency, lies in the method of rational investigation. The application or employment of this method enables us to avoid any whimsical proposition that would otherwise tend to cohere with our received system of knowledge, or particularly with our system of beliefs.

In the light of the expositions and discussions of Idoniboye and Wiredu one could notice that both of them emphasize the notion of system. Wiredu, for instance, enunciates that it is the method of rational investigation which provides system to the bits of information and deductions which we call our knowledge. We can see the same notion being emphasized in Idoniboye's discussions. Therefore, I think that the idea of system is the most fundamental concept in the coherence theory of truth.

So far I have mentioned some of the proponents or advocates of this theory of whom Idoniboye tries to present the views, notably of Bradley and Hegel who consider each member of the system to imply every other member. According to Idoniboye:

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<sup>20</sup> Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, 1980, P. 159.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, PP. 160 – 161.

*...Bradley, for instance, says that truth is the whole world in one aspect, an aspect supreme in philosophy ... whereas, for Hegel, each (system) contains the system as a whole in a different form, and ... for each while containing the whole system, is itself merely a part of that system. Or, as (Hegel) continually insists, "the Truth is the Whole; all forms of experience contribute to the expression of the truth, but truth cannot be exhaustively expressed by any one of them; only the full blaze of all experience can reveal the completeness of its glory...Truth is simply all experience...Experience is constituted by the inter-relation of subject and object. Whenever we have this there we have an attitude of mind, and there consequently we have a form of truth, for 'truth is agreement of mind with its object.' It is the one mind which stands related to diverse objects. Each relation is essential to it and each contains its own truth. Hence only the manifold relations to its objects exhaust its life, and reveal its truth. The truth is the whole because only the whole exhausts the forms of activity of the one mind which has experience."*<sup>22</sup>

In the passage above, Bradley's and Hegel's views of truth are discussed in general terms. In their claims, it seems to me, they emphasize the relation of truth to the whole system, and to be able to say whether a statement is true is to test it for coherence with this whole system. One thus may observe that there is only one way in which a comprehensive system of truth can be constructed as far as this conception of truth is concerned.

Some of the cohorts of the coherence theory, particularly logical positivists attempt to relate the system just discussed with science. For example, Otto Neurath, one of the principal modern proponents of the coherence theory and the logical positivist says:

*It is always science as a system of statements which is at issue. Statements are compared with statements ... Each new statement is compared with the totality of existing statements previously coordinated. To say that a statement is correct, therefore, means that it can be incorporated in this totality. What cannot be incorporated is rejected as incorrect. The alternative rejection of the new statement is, in general, one accepted only with great reluctance: the whole previous system of statements can be modified up to the point where it becomes possible to incorporate the new statement.*<sup>23</sup>

Here it is very well articulated that science involves a system of statements especially in the case of logical positivist adherents' of the theory, and this system, according to Idoniboye's view, is obtained by determining the facts by a principle, and either rejecting what does not agree (or

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<sup>22</sup> See F.H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966, P. 485 and Hegel, *The Origin and significance of Hegel's logic*, J.B. Baillie, London: Macmillan & co., 1901. PP. 214 and 264 quoted in D.E Idoniboye, 'Truth and Reality in African Thought' in *Proceedings of the Seminar on African Philosophy* by C. Sumner (ed.), Addis Ababa: Chamber Printing Press, 1-3 Dec. 1976, PP.97-98.

<sup>23</sup> 'Sociology and physicalism,' included in A.J. Ayer (ed.), *logical positivism*, The Free press, Glencoe 1959, p. 291 quoted in Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, 1980, p. 161.

cohere) with it (the system), or modifying the principle in such a way as to comprehend the facts. As I have just stated previously in Wiredu's expositions of the coherence theory, the method of rational investigation gives system to our knowledge.

Furthermore, in line with the immediately above-stated quotation, it is better to see what Idoniboye tries to conceive in the coherence theory:

*According to the theory as expounded by logical positivists the system with which all true statements must cohere is that accepted by the scientist of the contemporary culture. But the metaphysical proponents of coherence maintain that a statement cannot properly be called true unless it fits into the one comprehensive account of the universe or reality, which itself forms a coherent system. In either case, i.e. whether according to positivists' or metaphysicians' point of view, no statement can be known to be true until it is known to cohere with every other statement of the system.<sup>24</sup>*

Having pointed out this much with respect to the coherence theory of truth, let me proceed to discuss some of the kernel points of the pragmatic theory. Wiredu states the way this theory is commonly held when he says that, “[the pragmatic theory of truth) is frequently described as the theory which defines truth as useful belief].”<sup>25</sup> Here I would like to show the historical emergence of the movement called pragmatism before I get down to the discussion of the pragmatic theory in general.

In the history of philosophy, pragmatism emerged at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup>c as the most original contribution of American thought to the enterprise of philosophy. This movement is said to have received its initial theoretical formulation by Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914). Besides, it received wide and popular circulation through the brilliant and lucid essays of William James (1842 - 1910). It is then said that this movement was methodically implemented into the daily affairs of American institutions by John Dewey (1859-1952).

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<sup>24</sup> See, for instance, C. G. Hempel, 'on the logical positivists' Theory of Truth,' In *Analysis*, Vol. II, no. 4 1935, pp. 49-59 and Idoniboye, " Truth and Reality in African Thought", in *Proceedings of the Seminar on African Philosophy* by C. Summer (ed.), 1-3 Dec. 1976, PP. 98-99.

<sup>25</sup> Wiredu indicates that there is a certain justification for this characterization in *pragmatism* (Meridian Books, New York, 1955, originally published in 1907), the work in which William James first popularized the pragmatic theory of truth.

Wiredu would seem to be unhappy with James' conception of truth. According to Wiredu, James was apt to define truth indifferently as "*the idea or belief that has satisfactory consequences.*"<sup>26</sup> As far as James's definition of truth is concerned, Wiredu's fear is that this way of speaking laid James open to the charge or objection that pragmatism is a license for believing whatever one finds pleasing. Furthermore, for Wiredu, there is a significant distinction between idea and belief as already described in my previous discussions of the correspondence theory of truth. So, according to him, James also committed a most serious error in his definition of truth for he failed to distinguish between belief and idea.

Wiredu rather gives credence to Dewey in that he was able to make this important distinction between idea and belief, and give a more philosophically rigorous formulation of the pragmatic theory in his numerous works. In this regard, Wiredu exposes, Dewey pointed out in his review of *James' pragmatism* (included in essays in *Experimental Logic*, Dover, originally published by University of Chicago Press, 1916) that "... *what is relevant and crucial to the problem of defining truth is the role of 'ideas' in the construction of warranted judgments. An idea, that is, a hypothetical proposal, is true if it leads to the satisfactory solution of a problem.*"<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, we can see that Wiredu prefers Dewey's insights of the theory to that of James's for at least Dewey made the distinction between idea and belief that James would seem to use interchangeably in his definition of truth. Now, I seek to proceed to expose the central ideas of the theory.

Accordingly, the three distinguished philosophers, Peirce, James, and Dewey have contributed a lot in the inception and widespread development of the movement of pragmatism in the history of philosophy. In most general terms, their views in reference to pragmatism are meant to be: "... *the central message of these philosophers is that there is little value in philosophical theories that do not somehow make a difference in daily life. Pragmatism was more of a method of solving problems than it was a metaphysical system of the world.*"<sup>28</sup> Here, my study is mainly

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<sup>26</sup> See Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African culture*, 1980, P. 159.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, having said that an idea is true if it leads to the satisfactory solution of a problem, of course, the next problem is the question as to what the nature of satisfactory problem solving is. To this question, Wiredu indicates, Dewey devoted one of his most substantial works, *Logic: The theory of Inquiry*, (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1938).

<sup>28</sup> See Samuel Enoch Stumpf and James Fieser (eds.), *Philosophy: History and Problems* (McGraw-Hill: McGraw-Hill Companies), 2003, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., P. 393.

concerned with Peirce's view of the theory. Some philosophers such as Idoniboye also advise us to best approach the pragmatic theory of truth via Peirce. It is said that Peirce was highly influenced by the language of science, and it is particularly this scientific language that satisfies his pragmatic test for meaning. Therefore, there is a new explanation of how words acquire their meanings at the heart of Peirce's pragmatism.

In the work *Charles S. Peirce Selected Writings: Values in a Universe of Chance*, edited, with an Introduction and Notes by Philip P. Wiener, Wiener argues:

*...He (Peirce) framed the theory that a conception, that is, the rational purport of a word or other expression, lies exclusively in its conceivable bearing upon the conduct of life; so that, since obviously nothing that might not result from experiment can have any direct bearing upon conduct, if one can define accurately all the conceivable experimental phenomena which the affirmation or denial of a concept could imply, one will have therein a complete definition of the concept, and there is absolutely nothing more in it. For this doctrine he (Peirce) invented the name pragmatism.<sup>29</sup>*

As we can read from this passage, Peirce claims that a conception of word or any other expression need not be construed in separation from its conceivable bearing upon the conduct of life. He adds that a person must accurately define all the conceivable experimental phenomena that could be implied by the affirmation or denial of a concept, and consequently, a person will obtain a complete comprehension of the concept. Thus, we can see that Peirce's conception of meaning is influenced by the scientific experiment and practices.

In connection to this, it is better if we get familiar with the etymological meaning of the term *pragmatism*. Accordingly, the word *pragmatism* is said to be coined by Peirce from the Greek word *pragma* [which means "act" or "need"] just in order to emphasize the fact that words derive their meanings from actions of some sort. In this respect, Peirce would seem to stress the clearness and distinctness of our ideas. In my opinion, his notion of these conceptions of ideas is distinct from that of Descartes.

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<sup>29</sup> See Philip P. Wiener (ed.), *Charles S. Peirce Selected Writings: Values In a Universe of Chance* (New York: Dover Publication, Inc., 1958), P. 183.

Let us consider how Descartes tried to formulate his philosophical inquiry:

*When Descartes set about the reconstruction of philosophy, his first step was to (theoretically) permit skepticism and to discard the practice of the schoolmen of looking to authority as the ultimate source of truth. That done, he sought a more natural fountain of true principles, and professed to find it in the human mind; thus passing, in the directest way, from the method of authority to that of apriority...Self-consciousness was to furnish us with our fundamental truths, and to decide what was agreeable to reason. But since, evidently, not all ideas are true, he was led to note, as the first condition of infallibility, that they must be clear... But then, I suppose, seeing men, who seemed to be quite clear and positive, holding opposite opinions upon fundamental principles, he (Descartes) was further led to say that clearness of ideas is not sufficient, but that they [ideas] need also to be distinct, i.e., to have nothing unclear about them.<sup>30</sup>*

Here, Peirce tries to expose the way Descartes formulates his philosophy, and then proceeds to develop some objections towards Descartes's practice of philosophy. Consequently, he particularly objected to Descartes's conception of clear and distinct ideas. It is clearly discussed that, according to Peirce, the distinction between an idea *seeming* clear and really being so, never occurred to Descartes. Furthermore, Peirce seems to ridicule, for example, Descartes's question of testimony even of knowledge of external things in respect to the contents of our own minds. Peirce, I thought, seems to recommend that Descartes should not have appealed to the contents of our minds in order to be clear about, for example, knowledge of objects.

Peirce, in his discussion of Descartes's distinct ideas, goes on to illuminate that he probably meant by this that they must sustain (or survive) the test of dialectical examination. In other words, they must not only seem clear at the outset, but rather any critical reflection must never be able to bring to light points of obscurity connected with them. This is how Peirce attempts to make lucid Descartes's distinct ideas for Descartes did not explain himself with precision as far as Peirce is concerned.

Obviously speaking, Peirce was disgusted with the position held by Descartes in relation to many aspects of his philosophy. For example, Peirce maintained:

*...Descartes...took an idea to be clear if it seemed clear to him, never considering the possibility that an idea may be clear without really being clear. [Idoniboye adds that] it is not surprising, therefore, that Peirce, in considering the meaning*

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<sup>30</sup> Philip P. Wiener (ed.), *Charles S. Peirce Selected Writings: Values In A Universe Of Chance*, 1958, p.115.

*of truth, emphasized its public character and castigated the Cartesian viewpoint by which the individual judgment is the test of truth.*<sup>31</sup>

We can evidently observe that Peirce was against what Descartes meant by clear and distinct ideas as well as traditional Cartesian subjectivism, because Peirce's view of truth is public, and not an individualistic matter in character.

In connection to this, Stumpf and Fieser present:

*...Descartes...believed that intellectual certainty consisted in "clear and distinct" ideas, which we grasped by intuition. As such, our minds are purely theoretical instruments that could operate successfully in isolation from environmental circumstance. Against all of these assumptions, Peirce argued that thinking always occurs in a context, not in isolation from it. We do not derive meanings through intuition, but by experience or experiment. Thus, meanings are not individual or private but social and public. Again, if there is no way of testing ideas by their effects or public consequences, such ideas are meaningless.*<sup>32</sup>

Hence, these aspects of Cartesian philosophy and other similar viewpoints are not accepted by Peirce, and he has developed his own theory of meaning and idea of truth. Against the Cartesian viewpoints of clear and distinct ideas, Peirce is presented to have argued like this:

*Our ideas are clear and distinct only when we are able to translate them into some type of operation. For example, the adjectives hard and heavy have meaning only because we are able to conceive of some specific effects that are associated with these terms. Thus hard means that which cannot be scratched by many other substances and heavy means that which will fall if we let go of it. Underscoring the decisive role of effects in the meanings of words, Peirce argued that there would be absolutely no difference between a hard thing and a soft thing as long as they did not test differently. From such simple examples, Peirce generalized about the nature of meaning and knowledge in general. His basic point was that "our idea of anything is our idea of its sensible effects..." when specific objects are present, we can expect specific effects to follow. Thus a given word has no meaning if it refers to an object about which no practical effects can be conceived.*<sup>33</sup>

As we may vividly see this passage shows how Peirce attempts to develop his theory of the meaning of words in relation to their really existing, practically sensible effects. So, for him, a conception or any expression of a word cannot be isolated from its conceivably practical bearings or consequences upon the conduct of life.

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<sup>31</sup> See the work of Idoniboye I have repeatedly indicated in this paper, P. 99. Idoniboye also recommends to see his paper *Descartes and his clear and distinct ideas*; Cahiers philosophique Africains, Vol. 5. No.1 Jan. 1975.

<sup>32</sup> S.E. Stumpf and J.Fieser(eds.), *Philosophy: History and Problems*,6<sup>th</sup> ed.,2003, P. 395.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

In reviewing pragmatism, the meaning of words, and all Peirce's objections towards certain views of Descartes's philosophy, my major aim is to draw the attention of my readers to understand Peirce's view of the pragmatic theory of meaning in these contexts.

According to Idoniboye presentation of Peirce's view of truth: "*Peirce thinks that philosophical disputes about truth are absurd when truth is conceived as distinct from its practical bearings on the actual doubts and beliefs which infect human inquiry. He sees metaphysical visions of truth and falsity which look at these concepts like something existing apart from the inquiry itself as...(objectable).*"<sup>34</sup> We can thus note that Peirce in his conception of truth emphasizes its relation to practical human problems. We also recognize that his analysis of truth is centered on the method of scientific inquiry.

Furthermore, Peirce also emphasizes the role of belief in the conditions of human life. In this regard, Stumpf and Fieser depicted: "*Peirce argued that belief occupies a middle position between thought and actions. Beliefs guide our desires and shape our actions. But beliefs are "unfixed" by doubts. It is when the "irritation of doubt" causes a struggle to attain belief that the enterprise of thought begins. Through thought, we try to fix our beliefs so that we have a guide for action.*"<sup>35</sup> Thus, the place of belief is crucial in men's search for truth. Moreover, Peirce appreciates the authenticity of doubt that impels scientific inquiry. However, he discards Cartesian doubt to be pretended or feigned.

According to Idoniboye, it is noticeable that human beings evidently seek belief, and the search for truth in practice is the search for belief. In the particular reference to the pragmatic meaning of truth, Idoniboye presents, Peirce maintains: "*...The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth; he (Peirce) goes on to say, and the object represented in this opinion is the real. That is the way I would explain reality.*"<sup>36</sup> Thus, we can evidently note that Peirce agrees with the practice of scientific method where various kinds of investigations are carried out so as to establish the point (i.e., truth) upon which

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<sup>34</sup> D.E. Idoniboye, P. 99.

<sup>35</sup> S.E. Stumpf and J. Fieser(eds.), *Philosophy: History and Problems*, 6<sup>th</sup>.ed., 2003,s P. 395.

<sup>36</sup> D.E. Idoniboye, "Truth and Reality in African Thought" in *Proceedings of the Seminar on African philosophy* edited by C. Sumner, 1-3 Dec. 1976.

all investigators will ultimately agree. Moreover, he believes that the experimental method attains those beliefs that will ultimately be accepted by the scientific community.

Finally, Peirce tries to point out what he calls the elements of method in order to dispense with some of the whimsically established personal belief, and prejudice. In this regard, in resolving conflicts between alternative beliefs, he recommended the scientific method, which he felt combats personal prejudice.

The point is this:

*For one thing, the method of science requires that we state not only what truth we believe but also how we arrived at it. The procedures followed should be available to anyone who cares to retrace the same steps to test whether the same results will occur. Peirce continually emphasizes this public or community character of the method of science. Second, the method of science is highly self-critical. It subjects its conclusions to severe tests, and wherever shown, the conclusions of a theory are adjusted to fit the new evidence and new insights. This, Peirce says, ought also to be our attitude toward all of our beliefs. Third, Peirce felt that science requires a high degree of cooperation among all members of the scientific community. Such cooperation prevents any individual or group from shaping truth to fit its own interests. Conclusions of science, then, must be conclusions that all scientists can draw. Similarly, in questions of belief and truth, it should be possible for anyone to come to the same conclusions. This method of empirical inquiry means that there must be some practical consequence of any legitimate idea.<sup>37</sup>*

Thus, Peirce tries to get rid of some problems pertinent to emerging personal prejudices and contending beliefs. We can note that those essential elements of science, as Peirce calls them, such as the availability of procedures used or employed in drawing conclusions to any other investigators, its public character instead of private matter, and self-criticism are meant to eradicate the above-stated problems.

To sum up, it can be recalled that most of the activities are devoted or addressed to the tasks of exposing, and, in some cases, examining widely held Western theories of truth, namely, the correspondence, the coherence, and the pragmatic theories. These theories, I think, will serve as a background for my discussion of Wiredu's view of truth.

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<sup>37</sup> S.E. Stumpf and J. Fieser (eds.), *Philosophy: History and Problems*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., 2003, P. 396.

## 1.2 Wiredu's View of Truth

In our considerations of Wiredu's view of truth, first and foremost, we need to be clear about how he uses the word 'truth.' Unless this is clear, the sense in which I am going to discuss the concept of truth in Wiredu would otherwise be ambiguous. An ambiguity of this term will be evident, or will arise when approached especially from the viewpoint of its usage in the English language. Here, Wiredu points out that the concept of truth can be used, at least, in the two senses, moral and cognitive, and thus, in the English language, we cannot find separate terms or expressions for the two senses of the word 'truth.' Therefore, the absence of separate or independent terms for the two different senses of 'truth' may provide a conducive ground for the ambiguous conceptions of what I am speaking of truth in my forthcoming discussions.

In this regard, Wiredu himself states the confusions that arise when one talks of truth:

*... Quite frequently, the word 'truth' is used to express not the cognitive concept of veridicality but the moral idea of veracity. When political orators and public guardians of morality praise truth, we may be sure that what inspires their passionate eloquence under the heading of truth is not so dry a topic as the cognitive concept of truth but rather the more sublime subject of honesty or truthfulness.<sup>38</sup>*

What is remarkable here is that Wiredu is concerned about making a distinction between the two senses in which the word 'truth' can be expressed.

Consequently, a thinker by the name N.K. Dzobo [Ghana?] presents an Akan word 'anukware', which expresses the moral sense of truth. He says:

*... Anukare is an Akan word for truth, where it is spelled nokware. This is made up of 'ano'-meaning 'mouth', and 'koro'- meaning 'one', hence [literally,] anokware (anukware) means 'one mouth.' Truth as anukware means a statement that is made with 'one mouth', i.e., made with consistency and without contradiction in the description of the same reality. Internal consistency and harmony are therefore held as the marks of a true statement.<sup>39</sup>*

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<sup>38</sup> Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), P. 116.

<sup>39</sup> See N.K. Dzobo, "Knowledge and Truth: Ewe and Akan Conceptions," in Kwasi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye(eds.) (*Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies*, I., 1992), PP. 81-82.

One may question where these consistency and harmony occur, and the occasions in which a person is said to fail to fulfill these criteria of truth as held by Dzobo. Dzobo thus argues:

*... [This is]...consistency among truth-claims made by the same person about one and the same reality. This... [kind] of consistency might be called 'internal' consistency and is generally required by people in establishing the validity of statements. For this reason as soon as an individual contradicts himself (which means speaking with two mouths) he is said to be speaking a lie....It can be concluded then that the anukware conception of truth is the 'internal' consistency and harmony that exists among statements made by the same person about one and the same reality.<sup>40</sup>*

In these investigations what we have to be clear about is that Dzobo attempts to present an Akan word for 'truth' as a distinct term to signify the moral sense of the word 'truth.'

In this connection, it is stated that the Ewe of Ghana also have several indigenous conceptions that can be used to express their rejection of falsehood. Among others, for example, consider the following:

*... One way of saying that, "... 'you are telling a lie' is 'you have two heads.' As a proverb puts it: "one person does not grow two heads" ('Ame deka metoa ta eve o'). This is a way of saying 'stop contradicting yourself.' Other expressions are: "There are two tongues in the mouth of a liar"; "It is the liar who grows the tongue of an alligator (i.e., a species of lizard which is said to have naturally grown a forked (double) tongue.) 'His mouth is twin (two-pronged)' (Nano ye nta - Akan), i.e., "he is a Liar."<sup>41</sup>*

Therefore, as we can see, the supposition is that the Ewe and Akan of Ghana hate a person who tells a lie since they believe that anybody who does so is contradicting himself or herself. And in some indirect way the expressions said for falsehood in the above-mentioned quotations stress consistency and harmony among the statements made by one and the same person as the criteria of truth conceived as *anukware*. Moreover, Wiredu attempts to avoid the ambiguity that would otherwise arise by observing:

*... The Akans have separate expressions for the two senses of the word 'truth.' 'Nokware' is the word which they use to express the moral sense of 'truth.' Literally, 'Nokware' means 'one voice,' the idea being apparently that truthfulness consists in saying to others only what one would say to one self. For*

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., P.82.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

*the cognitive concept of truth the Akans use not one word but a phrase which may be translated as 'what is the case' or 'what is so.'*<sup>42</sup>

As we can view from Wiredu's speech, in the case of the purely cognitive sense of the Akan rendition of truth, there is no one single word in Akan for truth. Hence rather they use a phrase, and this matter can be presented as follows:

*... To say that something is true, the Akan say simply that it is so, and truth is rendered as what is so... although the Akan do not have a single word for truth, they do have the concept of truth. This concept they express by the phrase nea ete saa (a proposition which is so). The word nea means 'that which', ete, which is a form of 'to', which the verb 'to be' in Akan, means 'is', and saa means 'so'... (Thus nea ete saa may be translated as that which is so).*<sup>43</sup>

This discussion is all about showing how Wiredu is primarily interested in arresting or curbing the ambiguity that will arise when we speak of his view of truth by presenting a distinctive terms and/or phrase for, at least, the two senses of the concept of 'truth.' Here Wiredu, in my opinion, is very well aware that clarity of linguistic meaning can contribute to philosophic clarity. In this respect, he would seem to me to talk of the significance of making this distinction when he warns that, "... [unless it is made clear,] nothing is easier than to confuse the two concepts of truth which I have just distinguished, which often makes it possible for the careless or disingenuous to import overtones of righteousness into the discussion of purely cognitive matters."<sup>44</sup>

Accordingly, I think, it has now become apparent that my discussion of Wiredu's view of truth has nothing to do with the moral sense of truth but with the strictly cognitive concept of truth. Having distinguished the two senses of the concept of truth, and identified the sense in which I am going to use truth, the question has now become to see Wiredu's view of truth in the manner explained above.

In consequence, in his work of *Philosophy and an African Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 1980), Wiredu clearly argues: "... It is an essential fact about opinion that an opinion is necessarily a thought advanced from some specific point of view. Hence, in the case of truth..., we must recognize the cognitive element of point of view as intrinsic to the concept of

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<sup>42</sup> Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and An African culture*, 1980, P. 116.

<sup>43</sup> See Kwasi Wiredu, "The concept of Truth in the Akan language", 239-243' in P.H. Coetzee and A. P. Roux (eds.), *The African Philosophy Reader: A Text with Readings* ( London: Routledge, 1998), P. 240.

<sup>44</sup> Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African culture*, 1980, P. 116.

*truth. Truth, then, is necessarily joined to point of view, or better truth is a view from some point; and there are as many truths as there are points of view.*"<sup>45</sup>

Wiredu apparently explains his usage of "opinion" as follows:

*...The word 'opinion' is often used in such a way as to suggest uncertainty. One contrasts established fact with mere opinion. I do not, of course, mean 'opinion' in this sense. An established fact is simply an opinion felt to be secure from some individual [or specific] point of view or set of points of view. What I mean by opinion is a firm rather than an uncertain thought. I mean what is called a considered opinion. The word 'opinion' is also often used to refer to attitudes to situations as opposed to factual accounts of them, but here I treat of opinion as to facts.*<sup>46</sup>

So, it is vividly stated that one need not confuse Wiredu's usage of the word 'opinion' with the usual way of using or conceiving it. It is clear that his way of using this word is against both uncertainty as opposed to an established fact and what we might call attitudes to some kind of circumstances or situations as opposed to factual accounts of the situations in question. Hence, for him, opinion is rather a firm thought and relates to facts of situations.

Wiredu then attempts to disclose how a natural phenomenology of opinion needs to be construed in the briefest possible compass or sense. Wiredu, in a quite basic sense, associates the holding of opinions with a human necessity rather than regarding it as an option. Or to put it simply, the holding of opinions is not an option but rather it is a human necessity. And peoples' belief to take something to be so or not so with certainty is to hold an opinion on the matter in question as far as Wiredu's view goes. In this regard, he uses 'opinion' interchangeably with 'belief', 'contention', 'position,' 'view,' 'judgment,' 'assertion', etc. Lastly, Wiredu warns that construing an opinion this way is to understand it in the strong sense of 'opinion, not a weaker one. He is against a weaker sense of this word by saying:

*...A matter of opinion – 'opinion' here being used in the weaker sense- is a matter with regard to which criteria are unclear or even possibly non-existent or the evidence is scanty and there is, consequently, doubt and uncertainty. For instance, is this year's Beauty Queen the most beautiful women in the country? Well, this, as we say, is a matter of opinion. In this sense, the proposition that two plus two equals four is not a matter of opinion. However, in the stronger sense of*

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid.,p.115.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp. 115-116.

*'opinion,' it is still an opinion; it is a taking something to be so. It is still an outcome of a mental effort, the result of the mind's activity of systematization and validation. It is undoubtedly among the most robust of statements...If an opinion can ever be conceived of as a thought advanced with full assurance from some point of view, then there is nothing amiss philosophically in classing scientific and mathematical propositions alongside others as opinions.*<sup>47</sup>

So, Wiredu attempts to show the sense in which he uses the word 'opinion' as distinct from its weaker sense or our commonly held view of it. Wiredu himself adds that it is a fact worthy of the greatest emphasis that we cannot choose to hold or not to hold an opinion at will. But rather he states how an opinion starts as indicated below:

*... The formation of opinion is governed by rules- rules of evidence and of formal logic. A person can choose what problems or fields of inquiry he may turn his mind to, but once faced with a specific problem, he cannot decide just anyhow what conclusion to adopt. This fact is of paramount importance for my view of truth. Truth, according to that view, is nothing but opinion; but opinion is normally the outcome of rational inquiry. It was to emphasize this aspect of the matter that Dewey defined truth as warranted assertibility.*<sup>48</sup>

We can also observe that an opinion is not a matter of will for Wiredu. But rather its formulation has a rational base. In this respect, Wiredu's view of truth is nothing over and above opinion. He also maintains that rational persons will not or even cannot form their opinions anyhow. He further confirms this view as follows:

*... Confronted with a problem about any phenomenon, we do not shut our eyes and "assert" anything that comes into our heads. Such simplicity of approach is ... not dreamt of even in the most whimsical philosophy. We undertake an inquiry, investigation or research... Inquiry, in the standard sense, is a process involving the use of the combined resources of observation, logic and imagination. We are not born into the world ready-made masters of the art of inquiry, of the art, that is to say, of arriving at opinions. Hence the necessity for education-education in logic, formal and informal (academically or through daily experience) and in such subject matter as our circumstances may require or permit... It is the insistence on the need for belief to be in accordance with the canons of rational investigation which distinguishes my view from relativism.*<sup>49</sup>

As we can note from Wiredu's discussion, his notion of forming an opinion with regard to certain problem or any other issues seeks fundamental rational inquiry. Wiredu, in my opinion,

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.,pp.174-175.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.,p.176.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

seems to argue that one cannot blindly form an opinion regarding the confronted or faced problem, but rather he or she needs to undertake a rational investigation in order to solve the problem in question and thereby forms an opinion about it.

Thus, we are by now clear with Wiredu's usage or conception of opinion. In connection to this, we have to understand that Wiredu's view of truth is all about his identification of truth with opinion [hint: an opinion in the sense just discussed above]. However, Wiredu's thesis that truth is nothing over and above or beyond opinion has been much criticized, and we can also expect that so many objections may be possibly directed towards his view of truth. Therefore, right now I am going to describe some points of the objections, and then attempt to present how Wiredu tries to react to the objections.

### **1.2.1 Wiredu's View of Truth Defended**

Under this heading, I would like to emphasize that an attempt to defend Wiredu's view of truth will be one of the most fundamental preoccupations of my study. In Wiredu's definition of truth, we have already happened to see that truth is nothing over and above opinion. This simply means that truth is a view from some point, and there are as many truths as there are points of view. To this view of truth held by Wiredu we may anticipate various objections.

Hence, among others, look at the following objection, which sets out to show that Wiredu's view of truth involves a contradiction:

*... Suppose two people maintain two mutually contradictory propositions. Then, if there are as many truths as there are points of view, both propositions must be true. But of two mutually contradictory propositions only one can be true. (For example, it cannot be both true that  $2+2 = 4$  and that  $2+2$  does not equal 4). Therefore, the view that truth is opinion implies a contradiction.<sup>50</sup>*

Wiredu disagrees with this objection. He therefore mainly resorts to the role of point of view in the analysis of his concept of truth. And he tries to point out a condition in which the alleged contradiction or the contradiction in question arises. Against the objection just stated, Wiredu enunciates:

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<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*,p.116.

*This objection fails, however, because it does not hold fast enough to the element of point of view in the concept of truth. A contradiction arises only when two mutually inconsistent propositions are asserted from one and the same point of view. If '2+2 = 4' is held true from one point of view and '2+2 does not equal 4' is held true from another point of view, there is no reason except lack of logical sophistication why a third point of view should hold both propositions true.<sup>51</sup>*

Wiredu here seems to say that our hypothetical objector should take into consideration the rational basis of point of view in our concerns with his concept of truth. And in my understanding of Wiredu, what we have to note is that two mutually contradictory or inconsistent propositions [such as the ones just indicated above] cannot be asserted or held true from one and the same point of view. It is, for him, when two mutually incompatible propositions are asserted from one and the same point of view that a contradiction occurs. It seems to me, therefore, that once a proposition that '2+2 = 4' is held true from one point of view and that 'two plus two does not equal 4' is held true from another point of view, then Wiredu seems not to accept a third point of view which holds that both mutually contradictory propositions should be true (i.e., a propositions that '2+2=4' and that 'two plus two does not equal 4' must be true provided that there are as many truths as there are points of view). In connection to this, an objector seems to hold that but of two mutually contradictory propositions only one can be true. So, I have already stated Wiredu's reaction to this matter in reference to the point of view.

In my opinion, Wiredu regards a claim that both mutually contradictory propositions must be true as a third point of view, and consequently, proceeds to say that there is no reason except lack of logical sophistication for such a point of view to argue so. Wiredu also anticipates another related objection just like this: *"I can still imagine some objector insisting: 'surely 2+2=4; and that is the truth of the matter. If anybody believes anything to the contrary, he is wrong. He is simply misled by false opinion; and that is that. Nothing can change the obvious fact that there is such a thing as false opinion and that, therefore, truth cannot be identical with opinion.'"*<sup>52</sup>

This quotation clearly discusses an objection conjured up or envisaged by Wiredu to be further directed towards his view of truth. In what follows we shall see his reactions. In his reactions,

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.,pp.116-117.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.,p.118.

Wiredu never admits what an objector designates as ‘false opinion’, and never acknowledges the fact that surely  $2+2=4$ ; and anybody who believes the contrary is wrong or mistaken to be a guarantee to reject all other contrary or opposite beliefs to one’s own point of view.

The matter is just this:

*This [above-mentioned] objection shows that the lesson about the logical importance of the concept of point of view as an element in the concept of truth value (i.e., truth or falsity) is still not learnt. It is no, of course, disputed that a proposition held to be true from one point of view may be held to be false from another. The phrase ‘false opinion’ only refers... to the complex occurrence of assertion and counter-assertion. My contention is that it can mean nothing more. I too am reasonably confident in the belief that  $2+2=4$  and that anybody who holds the contrary is mistaken. But I cannot help recognizing that this is simply to affirm my belief and express my disagreement with any contrary belief. Neither the fact that I hold a given opinion nor that many reputable people share my opinion can transform it into something of a different category from opinion.<sup>53</sup>*

In connection to this immediately above-expressed contention or reaction, Wiredu regards reference to the phenomena of assertion and counter-assertion as a rather important aspect of our subject (or the discussion of truth). Accordingly, he continues to argue:

*... A counter – assertion is an assertion which contradicts another assertion to which it is a response. Let us take the liberty of using the term ‘co-assertion’ to mean an assertion which agrees with another assertion to which it is a response. Counter-assertion and co-assertion clearly involve comparison of assertions. Suppose we bring the two topics under the one comprehensive heading of ‘comparative assertion.’ Then, I contend that the concept of truth is relevant only to comparative contexts. Truth and falsity are concepts whose whole essence consists simply in indicating the agreement or disagreement of one point of view with another, antecedent or anticipated.<sup>54</sup>*

What we, I think, need to note is that Wiredu emphasizes the place of the concept of comparative contexts in our investigation of truth. Consequently, he maintains that the concept of truth is relevant to comparative inquiry. Wiredu, in this respect, develops the notions of a primary inquiry and a comparative inquiry. He argues that, “If we call an inquiry which terminates in a primary judgment a primary inquiry and one which terminates in a comparative judgment a

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.,pp.118-119.

*comparative inquiry, then the position at which we have arrived is that the concept of truth belongs not to the domain of primary but rather to that of comparative inquiry*"<sup>55</sup>

However, for the sake of some sort of clarification, Wiredu continues to remark that we should not overlook the existence of an intimate relation between the two types of investigation, namely primary and comparative investigations. In this regard, Wiredu holds that the substantive problem of a comparative investigation is exactly identical with that of corresponding primary investigation, and vice versa. Nevertheless, he also reminds us not to ignore the fact that the two enterprises or investigations are not identical in their antecedents or in the logical structure of their results.

This matter is briefly presented as indicated below:

*...The comparative inquiry is a response to the challenge of a pre-existing judgment, and its appropriate outcome is a judgment on a judgment. The primary investigation is, by contrast, a response to the challenge of a problematic situation and leads to a direct judgment on that. The relation between them, however, is obviously such that, whenever a primary judgment is made, a corresponding comparative judgment is automatic, given an appropriate context...On the analysis given, it should, I fancy, be clear by now that truth belongs only to a comparative context wherein to be true is to coincide with a corroborative point of view.*<sup>56</sup>

Here, we have noted that Wiredu's concept of truth belongs to domain of comparative inquiry wherein truth is identified with a corroborative point of view as already illustrated above. Consequently, we can observe that when Wiredu states that truth is a view from some point, it does not seem to me to argue that truth is relative to point of view, but rather it is relevant only to comparative contexts.

Let me clarify this point as follows: "... *truth is not relative to point of view. It is, in one sense, a point of view; but it is a point of view born out of rational inquiry, and the canons of rational*

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid.,pp.120-121.Here Wiredu remarks that he is thinking of the concept of truth as it is used in the ordinary discourse ,not in the Truth Functional Logic where the truth value belongs to the domain of primary, rather than to comparative inquiry. In that logic ,truth is that which ,being added to a function ...,converts it into a declarative sentence.Furthermore,Wiredu suggests to see the primary and comparative concepts of truth in his 'Truth as Logical Constant with an Application to the principle of Excluded Middle,' *Philosophical Quarterly*, October 1975.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 121.

*inquiry have a universal human application.”<sup>57</sup> With regard to the matter of point of view, Wiredu additionally stresses: “... Points of view are not windowless monads, incapable of interaction. They do interact through the medium of rational discussion. Points of view can frequently be, and are, regulated by the canons of rational thinking...In the light of last reflection... points of view are, to adapt a phrase of Peirce, subject to rational self-control.”<sup>58</sup>*

In this all moment of discussion, one can become confident that Wiredu’s frequent appeal to the canons of rational discussion in his discussions of the concept of points of view can make him easily escape the charge of relativism that at first sight seems to be inherent or evident to his view of truth. I wish to discuss the matter of relativism in this section after a moment. Besides, I have already stressed that in the analysis of Wiredu’s view of truth, the notion of point of view ought to be given due weight.

Hence for him, there is an essential relation of truth to point of view. To show this relation, Wiredu tries to give us this example:

*Consider the logical relation between the concepts of husband and wife. Given existing semantic conventions a wife is necessarily the wife of a husband. In a monogamous society each wife will have one husband and each husband, one wife. Suppose a man, himself a husband, were to remark in such a society: ‘There are as many wives as there are husbands’, nobody would, presumably, be tempted to protest that he was thereby claiming all the wives for himself. Now, the relation between truth and point of view in my account is logically analogous. Every truth is necessarily a truth from point of view.<sup>59</sup>*

Having been concerned this much with Wiredu’s aspect of his view of truth (i.e., there are as many truths as there are points of view), let me now proceed to raise, discuss and defend another objection which seems to be inevitably directed towards his conception of truth. Wiredu’s view of truth sounds exactly like relativism in the sense that if there are as many truths as there are points of view, then it follows that truth is relative to a point of view. This claim of relativism seems to be an integral part and parcel of his conception of truth. But, in fact, that is not the case.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 176-177.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p.218.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 186.

It is clearly mentioned by Wiredu that although truth is, in one sense, a point of view or a view from some point, it does not follow that truth is relative to point of view. In this regard, I have already pointed out that Wiredu's truth is relevant only to comparative contexts. By now, we happen to see Wiredu's general philosophical treatment of relativism.

First of all, Wiredu strongly argues against three philosophical doctrines: namely relativism, the practice of basing morality on religion, and the doctrine of faith as a stumbling block for the undertaking of philosophical inquiry. In my opinion, Wiredu here seems to maintain that philosophic enterprise can frequently be characterized by rational discussion and is thus based on dialogue. I also believe that philosophic inquiry without such elements as rational discussion, dialogue, persuasion, and so forth is not viable. Therefore, as I note in Wiredu's argument, we can really observe that the doctrines mentioned above will give little or no room for philosophy. In other words, for Wiredu, since these doctrines are among the stiffest impediments to dialogue and thus to philosophy, it follows that they need to be cast away.

I hope now that we have somehow got what Wiredu's attitude towards relativism might be. Wiredu seems to be worried about the real specification of relativism. Because he is concerned about the possibility of dialogical processes, Wiredu seems to be afraid that one may identify his position with relativism. He maintains that real relativism closes or seems to close a door to dialogue. In a public presentation made at an international conference, Wiredu treated the notion of relativism as follows:

*... Relativism in this sense is the position that views cannot be evaluated across cultures, because every evaluation is, and can only be, on the basis of criteria or canons operative in one's culture. To evaluate the views of somebody belonging to a different culture is, therefore, to extend the jurisdiction of the canons of thought of one's own culture arbitrarily over others. A crucial, standardly unstated and unsupported, premiss of this reasoning is that there are irreducible differences in the canons of thought of the different cultures of the world.<sup>60</sup>*

Obviously speaking, Wiredu seems to designate this position as real relativism, and thus thought of it as one of the major impediments to the cultivation of intercultural or cross-cultural dialogue. Moreover, he tries to specify the usual way of conceiving relativism as presented below, with which he seems to disagree. It is this: "... *It is usual for relativism to be defined as 'the view that*

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<sup>60</sup> See Kwasi Wiredu, 'The Role of Philosophy In Intercultural Dialogue: An African Perspective', World Congress of Philosophy, Istanbul, 2003, pp. 6-7.

*truth lacks objectivity and absoluteness- that all truth is a matter of personal opinion.*”<sup>61</sup> As it is vividly explained in the texts above, Wiredu attempts to specify the way in which relativism is often times defined, and then considers this definition to be unacceptable in his philosophical accounts of truth.

However, Wiredu thought, a given critic may put forward certain objection insisting that the very definition given above sounds exactly like Wiredu’s view of truth. Furthermore, it is clearly put that Wiredu has spoken against the notion of absolute truth, and has also actually said things like there are as many truths as there are points of view plus ‘*truth is personal*’<sup>62</sup> for him. Hence, the critic may maintain that this immediately offered passage subjects Wiredu’s position to subjectivism, relativism and anti-objectivity.

Wiredu, nonetheless, does not accept a part of the criticism that his view of truth is all about subjectivism, relativism and anti-objectivity. He responds that “... *at least the part about truth lacking objectivity ruins (my) similarity. On my view truth is both personal and objective.*”<sup>63</sup> As I have already repeatedly stated Wiredu offers several views against relativism. In addition to all what he pointed out in the course of his discussions, he stresses, for example, that, “... *it is the insistence on the need for belief to be in accordance with the canons of rational investigation which distinguishes my view from relativism.*”<sup>64</sup>

So, Wiredu’s view of truth is both personal and objective. Let us first consider the personal aspect of his view of truth. A critic may hold that if truth is personal, then what is personal is subjective, and consequently, Wiredu’s identification of truth with personal opinion may be tantamount to reducing it to something subjective or even private.

Consequently, Wiredu remarks: “*the trouble is that [the critic in question] seems to be employing an objective/subjective distinction which is defective. It is wrong to think that anything which involves essential reference to a person is subjective... something is subjective only if it is connected in an unlawful manner [or sense] with the peculiarities of a person.*”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, 1980, p 216.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

So, here we may observe, in Wiredu's contention, that there exists an essential difference between subjectivity and what is personal. For him, subjectivity, for example, may not have any rational ground or it cannot be as such subject to rational criticism or public comment. Therefore, it seems to be plausible that it may be spoken of subjectivity when there is the dependence of judgment on the singular characteristics or peculiarities of the individual or group which are inaccessible to the activity of public criticism because it seems to me that there is what Wiredu calls an unlikable account in such subjectivity.

Wiredu, in my opinion, seems to say that what consists in essential reference to a person is not necessarily subjective. He, in this sense, wants us to think of a person's metaphysical opinions. Here, we can see that though a person's metaphysical opinions are something personal, they are not something subjective in the above sense. Wiredu thus holds that, "... *In this case there surely would be no implication that a man's metaphysical opinions are irrational and capricious or immune from public criticism.*"<sup>66</sup>

Thus, subjectivity, in Wiredu's view, is no longer open to public comment and criticism. Furthermore, it lacks rationality and cannot therefore be objective in Wiredu's account. Wiredu maintains that, "... *(Truth) can be both personal and rational; and what is rational is ipso facto objective.*"<sup>67</sup> The point is therefore that rationality is absolutely crucial in a man's opinions, and any claim to knowledge, in Wiredu's accounts, cannot be immune from criticism. Hence, Wiredu seems to have defended that his view of truth is not a relativist and subjectivist one. But rather it is personal, rational and thus objective. Furthermore, Wiredu emphasizes the place of rational inquiry in human thoughts as follows:

*...I maintain that...a basic sensitivity to the demands of rational inquiry is part of the mental make-up of any creature that can be called a human being. This, as I have pointed out already, is why there are inter-personal criteria of rational belief. The existence of inter-personal criteria is the test of objectivity. Through this what is personal can also be inter-personal. I hope you can now see that my view that truth is opinion does not imply that truth is a subjective matter.*<sup>68</sup>

In Wiredu's contentions, we are able to recognize that he has given due weight to the role of inter-personal criteria or canons of rational belief in human communication. Besides, he would

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

seem to think that his view of truth contributes to the refutation of relativism in identifying the principle of the objectivity of truth with the principle of rational belief.

Additionally, Wiredu maintains that, “...*It seems to me that in the way of opinion, that is objective which is in conformity with the principles of rational inquiry...objectivity does not require that an abstract principle should be erected into an abstract object. Objectivity, in other words, ought not to be confused with objectivism.*”<sup>69</sup> Thus, Wiredu associates what he believes to be objective with what he believes to be in conformity or in accordance with the principles of rational inquiry. And in this connection, as I have already pointed out, the question of the objectivity of truth is not a question about the formal definition of truth, but rather it is a question about the nature of belief as far as Wiredu is concerned. So, for Wiredu, it seems to me that what is determined to be either objective or subjective is our belief or judgment of truth or falsity rather than the concept of truth itself.

However, as we may happen to realize in Wiredu’s contentions, the notion of objectivism has to do with the determination of the formal definition of truth. It would seem stated above that objectivism, as Wiredu termed it, requires that an abstract principle should be in conformity with an abstract object. In this regard, Wiredu seems, in my opinion, to maintain that objectivism consists in absolute independence of the object as such of human minds, and consequently, to acquire the truth of an abstract object, we should establish or formulate an abstract principle which should be erected into an abstract object. Nevertheless, Wiredu does not agree with such sort of conception of truth. In relation to this conception, he raises the issue of an objectivist theory of truth, which draws an absolute distinction between truth and opinion. He then states that according to the objectivist theory, truth is said to be independent of opinion, and it makes sense to say that a man’s opinions may change but it is meaningless or nonsense to say that the truth itself may change. In other words, once a proposition is true, it is true in itself and forever. Truth thus is said to be timeless and eternal. In my opinion, in doing so, the disclosure of the formal definition of truth is made possible. Nonetheless, in my understanding of Wiredu’s pronouncements, what is required to be in conformity with the principles or criteria or canons of rational inquiry is our judgment or belief, and hence, in my opinion, that is what Wiredu seems to me to mean by objectivity.

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121-122.

Hence, for Wiredu it seems that the question of the objectivity of truth is, strictly, a question about the nature of belief (i.e., whether or not a belief is in conformity with the canons of rational investigation) rather than a question of the disclosure of the concept of truth itself or what Wiredu calls the formal definition of truth. This illustration, I hope, may make explicit what Wiredu's view of objectivity is and that of the objectivity of truth are all about.

In sum, as long as my discussion is concerned, I have attempted to present how Wiredu tries to defend his view of truth from various objections that would be held against his view. Among others, I have described and discussed that Wiredu's view of truth has nothing to do with relativism, contradiction, objectivism, absolutism, dogmatism, and the like. But rather his view of truth is personal, rational, and thus objective.

### **1.3 Language and Truth**

#### **1.3.1 Habermas's Pragmatic Theory of Meaning and Wiredu's Idea of the Concept of Meaning: A Comparison Involving Truth in Focus**

##### **1.3.1.1 Habermas's Pragmatic Theory of Meaning**

A pragmatic theory of meaning in Habermas, as we may know, is important in its own right as an account of meaning. In this respect, this theory revolves around the assertion that to understand an utterance is to understand the claim it raises. Beyond this task of formulating an account of meaning, Maeve Cooke would seem to state the main function of this theory as it must be seen or construed within the broader context of Habermas's project as a whole.

Consequently, Cooke tries to make explicit what this theory performs within this broader context of Habermas's holistic project as indicated below:

*...The theory represents an attempt to demonstrate an internal connection between everyday language use and argumentation; this is the point of Habermas's thesis that understanding is internally connected with reaching understanding...[Cooke] would suggest that we should interpret this as the thesis that the very comprehension of a linguistic utterance is connected with the*

*evaluation of reasons in argumentation (which is, by definition, oriented toward reaching agreement ..., according to Habermas).*<sup>70</sup>

Let's come back and see what guides the intention of Habermas's pragmatic theory of meaning. In this regard, "*Habermas tells us that we understand an utterance when we know what makes it acceptable. He elaborates: in distant analogy to the basic assumption of truth conditional semantics, I now want to explain an utterance as knowledge of the conditions under which a hearer may accept it.*"<sup>71</sup>

It seems, however, that Habermas is not fully satisfied by the basic assumption of truth-conditional or assertibility-conditional semantics though he, in some sense, compares it with an intention that guides his pragmatic theory of meaning. According to Cooke, Habermas's intersubjectivist or formal pragmatic approach to meaning theory is better understood as "...[A]n attempt to combine the insights of truth-conditional (and assertibility-conditional) semantics and use-oriented theories of meaning in a productive and non problematic way."<sup>72</sup>

Here therefore we have two approaches, semantic and use-oriented, to the question of meaning. And we can see that Habermas seeks to take some important insights from both theories that deemed necessary in his task of developing pragmatic approach to meaning theory. Thus, it is of vital importance to note that Habermas's theory is based on the combined insights of both semantic and use-oriented theories of meaning rather than on the separate insights of either theory, in my view.

As Cooke points out, Habermas tries to say that both theories are inadequate in their own right as accounts of meaning, and consequently, attempts to describe what is missing or problematic in both of them. Here the issue is presented as follows:

*Habermas argues that neither semantic nor use-oriented approaches to the problem of meaning are adequate as they stand...He claims that semantic approaches are guilty of various "abstractions," while use-oriented theories lose*

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<sup>70</sup> See Maeve Cooke, *Language and Reason: A Study of Habermas's Pragmatics* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1994), pp. 95-96.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p.96.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

*sight of the connection between meaning and a sense of validity that goes beyond the conventional validity of a given form of life.*<sup>73</sup>

Therefore, we can see that Habermas endorses the pragmatic theory of meaning or prefers a pragmatic approach to meaning with an intention to retain the connection between meaning and truth. Cooke describes:

*... Although Habermas comes down clearly in favor of a pragmatic approach to meaning, he wishes to hold on to the connection between meaning and “truth” (in the sense of a context-transcendent concept of validity) that he discerns at the heart of semantic theories. It is this connection that Habermas has in mind when he speaks of the inherent rationality of the linguistic medium, and it is this connection that I believe explains why he formulates his pragmatic or intersubjectivist theory of meaning “in distant analogy” to the idea that we understand a sentence when we know its truth conditions.*<sup>74</sup>

From this discussion, it is understandable that Habermas wants to accept the basic assumption of truth conditional semantics that we understand a sentence when we know its truth conditions, i.e., when we are able to assert that a sentence is true or false. Of course, Habermas modifies this assumption, in his theory of *Communicative Action*, as we understand an utterance when we know what makes it acceptable. Thus, in any case we can see that Habermas wants to integrate (or combine) truth-conditional semantics with his pragmatic account of meaning. Finally, I can argue that Habermas becomes partly interested in the semantic approach of meaning for this reason though he does not accept the abstract aspect of the theory.

Later on, Habermas turns his face to the critical examination of the traditional semantic approaches to meaning by arguing that these approaches to meaning have been guilty of three “abstractions,” namely a “semanticist,” “cognitivist,” and an “objectivist” abstractions. Here I would like to present first and foremost what each of them refers to and then why Habermas criticizes them.

In the first place, “... *The cognitive abstraction is the belief that all meaning can be led back to the propositional content of utterances, thus indirectly reducing meaning to the meaning of*

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

assertoric sentences.<sup>75</sup> According to Cooke, Habermas seems to regard the need to overcome the “cognitive abstraction”, understood as:

*[T]he prioritizing of the assertoric function, as intuitively evident. [Habermas] points out that as participants in communication, we know that we use language to fulfill various kinds of very different functions (or purposes), and that it is not intuitively clear why one should accord priority to the assertoric aspect. As far as the cognitivist abstraction goes, the burden of proof is on the “cognitivist,” who has to convince us that our intuitions are mistaken.<sup>76</sup>*

In my understanding of Habermas’s critical reflection on the cognitivist abstraction, it seems to me that Habermas is very well aware of the multi-functional uses of language ,and hence, he does not consider any priority solely given to the assertoric function to be indispensable. Habermas thus regards any priority accorded to the assertoric aspect of sentences or utterances to be reductionist, which overlooks the multidimensional uses of language.

Secondly, *“the semanticist abstraction is the belief that the analysis of linguistic meaning can confine itself to the analysis of sentences, abstracting from the pragmatic rules that affect the use of sentences...The objectivist abstraction has to do with the semanticist conception that truth conditions are what make a sentence true, abstracting from the knowledge of truth conditions that can be ascribed to a hearer or to a speaker”<sup>77</sup>*

Having defined the abstractions inherent in the traditional semantic approaches to meaning, Cooke also proceeds to make explicit the necessity of overcoming the objectivist abstraction according to Habermas. Cooke presents this idea of Habermas like this: *“...He argues that the need to replace a conception of meaning in terms of truth conditions with one [i.e., a conception of meaning] in terms of knowing the conditions under which a speaker is entitled to assert it as true is obvious if we aspire to and if we recognize that in a large class of cases the truth conditions are not available.”<sup>78</sup>*

Here we can observe that Habermas particularly depicts the cases in which the need arises to replace a conception of meaning in terms of truth conditions with a conception of meaning in

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., pp. 98-99.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p.99.

terms of the knowledge of truth conditions that can be ascribed to a hearer or to a speaker, or in terms of knowing the conditions under which a speaker is entitled to assert it as true. These cases are explanations of the meaning of a wide range of sentences and a large class of cases in which the truth conditions are not available, as plainly described in the above-mentioned quotation.

Cooke then keeps on depicting:

*...The traditional belief of theories of meaning that truth conditions can be specified semantically rests on the unrealistic assumption that for every sentence, or at least for every assertoric sentence, procedures are available for effectively deciding when the truth conditions are satisfied... [Habermas] instead suggests replacing the idea that the meaning of a sentence can be specified in terms of its truth conditions with an orientation toward the question of what it is for a speaker or a hearer to know the conditions under which the truth conditions would be satisfied. Habermas refers to this as the “epistemic turn” in truth-conditional semantics.<sup>79</sup>*

Therefore, as Cooke tries to hold, these three abstractions taken together considerably restrict the scope of semantic theories. Thus, Habermas calls for the need to overcome the limitation inherent to the traditional semantic approaches to meaning.

One may then question what kind of meaning theory is appropriate in Habermas’s idea. Here Cooke provides us with a response as follows: “*what is needed, in Habermas’s opinion, is a theory of meaning that overcomes all three limitations while holding on to the idea of an internal connection between meaning and validity in context-transcendent sense.*”<sup>80</sup>

In a similar fashion, Habermas wants to overcome the limitations of use-oriented theories of meaning. Earlier I have already pointed out that though Habermas shares certain insights of use-oriented theories, he does not accept all insights or aspects of these theories because he, for example, claims that use-oriented theories lose sight of the connection between meaning and a sense of validity that goes beyond the conventional validity of a given form of life. The idea is clearly presented by Cooke as follows: “... [*The use-oriented theories of meaning*] have insisted,

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 98.

*correctly, that meaning is always relative to the institutions and conventions of a social practice, (that means) to the “agreement in definitions and judgments” of a prevailing ‘form of life.’”<sup>81</sup>*

Here, in my opinion, Habermas does not completely and totally reject the institutional origin and consensual or conventional aspect of meaning, but what he seems to undermine is the wholesale attribution of meaning to the conventional validity of a given form of life. Cooke presents the problem emerges once the notion of meaning thus understood. He states that, “*However, in doing so, [the use-oriented theories of meaning] have tended to dispense with the idea of an internal connection between meaning and a sense of validity that cannot be reduced to that of any given context ... this is the connection that Habermas sets out to retain.*”<sup>82</sup>

Subsequently, in this regard, in order to overcome the limitations of use- oriented theories of meaning, Habermas shows that “*understanding is connected with reaching understanding through the evaluation of validity claims in argumentation.*”<sup>83</sup>

According to Cooke’s depiction of Habermas:

*... The assertion of a link between understanding and the evaluation of validity claims in argumentation within the context of a pragmatic account of meaning makes good what Habermas believes to be the main weakness besetting existing pragmatic theories: their reduction of validity to the conventional validity of a given form of life.*<sup>84</sup>

Furthermore, Habermas also talks about the inextricable bond between understanding and the intersubjective processes of evaluation, and eventually the advantage of this link in his discussion of pragmatic account of meaning. This idea is depicted as follows:

*...The assertion that understanding is connected with intersubjective processes of evaluation not only adds a new dimension to pragmatic accounts of meaning; it also reveals the inherently pragmatic dimensions of understanding [At some point he even asserts that “understanding is the inherent telos of human speech.”] ... Habermas argues that the “validation conditions” which a speaker has to be able to reconstruct in order to understand an utterance are tied to pragmatic contexts of interpretation and discussion. Habermas’s assertion that understanding is inextricably bound with (understanding) may thus allow him to retain what he*

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., pp. 96-97.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

*sees as the valid insight of truth-conditional semantics while radically undermining the very notion of a semantic theory of meaning.*<sup>85</sup>

In general, Habermas develops a pragmatic approach to meaning theory. However, he does not make use of all the insights of existing pragmatic theories because he realizes the problems pertinent to these theories such as the reduction of validity to the conventional validity of a given form of life. In order to overcome these problems, Habermas calls for the utilization of the combined insights from both semantic and use-oriented theories of meaning. However, here also, Habermas criticizes and tries to overcome the problems common to these theories. Firstly, in the case of traditional semantic approaches to meaning, as I have already presented, he critically evaluates “semanticist,” “cognitivist” and “objectivist” abstractions. Regarding the use-oriented theories of meaning Habermas needs to challenge the wholesale attribution of meaning solely to a conventional validity of a given form of life. In this regard, in order to transcend this limitation, he tries to show that understanding is connected with reaching understanding through the evaluation of validity claims in argumentation within the context of a pragmatic account of meaning.

### **1.3.1.2 Wiredu’s Idea of the Concept of Meaning**

Wiredu in his work of *Philosophy and an African Culture* tries to emphasize the need to explain the concept of meaning. He does not also overlook the connection between the conceptions of meaning and truth. He therefore argues:

*Indeed the concept of meaning itself is one of the most basic for philosophical analysis, and ... questions of truth and meaning are intimately connected... that truth presupposes meaningfulness is perhaps too obvious... an expression must make sense, impart some meaning, in order to raise the question of truth and falsity. What is senseless cannot intelligibly, and hence intelligently, be spoken of as either true or false.*<sup>86</sup>

By an expression, Wiredu seems to mean a word. He then defines what he means by words as follows:

*Now, words considered externally are artificial signs which in themselves are simply brute existences. The Word ‘coal’ is either a sound, if uttered, or a series of marks, if written. In themselves, words are sheer physical existences exactly*

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 101.

*like chairs, tables and trees. They acquire the character of being able to impart a meaning only by being made in virtue of a process which is in principle conventional to stand for something beyond themselves. [He states that] words do stand for concepts or ideas [or states of affairs].<sup>87</sup>*

In the same token, by quoting Wiredu, Masolo spells out:

*... There is no meaning of language other than in terms of what it signifies and refers to... [Words] are simple conventional signs made into a system to impart information. Their significance, then, derives from the ideas which are connected to that which they signify or to which they refer...A philosopher, Wiredu believes, must of necessity direct his search for the meaning of words only to their relationship with [a sort of things] or situations they stand for.<sup>88</sup>*

From this discussion and exposition, we can see that an expression is to be understood only in terms of a meaning or information it conveys or imparts in a sensible manner. In connection to this, it is evident in Wiredu, that words signify ideas and stand for (or refer to) entities, situations, relations, state of affairs, etc.

Furthermore, Wiredu stresses a number of consolidating remarks and suggestions regarding an expression, words and truth as follows:

*... It is quite reasonable to say that an expression which refers to no possible state of affairs is a meaningless expression in the sense that it can communicate nothing. As remarked earlier on, words acquire meaning only by being associated with something beyond themselves. Therefore, if a word or a series of words signifies no possible thing or state of affairs, then it cannot be said to have meaning; and if it has no meaning, then it cannot be used to say anything true or even false. I may remark... that what I am saying is not that an expression is meaningless if it refers to no object; that would be false, for the word 'unicorn' has a meaning although there are no unicorns. What I am saying is that an expression is meaningless if it refers to no possible object or situation, etc.; and unicorns, of course, are possible objects.<sup>89</sup>*

Having discussed Habermas's idea of pragmatic theory of meaning and Wiredu's idea of the concept of meaning, let me proceed to compare their ideas with particular reference to truth. One of the most typically praised and shared features in both Wiredu and Habermas is that they emphasize that there should be an inextricably intimate connection between the conceptions of

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> See D.A. Masolo, *African Philosophy In search of Identity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 128.

<sup>89</sup> Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, 1980, p.103

meaning and truth. In the case of Wiredu, as we already saw in his quotations, questions of truth and meaning are intimately connected since truth presupposes meaningfulness. So, for him, we cannot speak of truth without sensible and informative aspects of a meaningful expression. And Wiredu declares that any meaningful expression is possible if and only if a word or a series of words signifies possible things or state of affairs. Consequently, it is when a word or an expression represents possible sorts of things, situations, etc that it has meaning and then can be spoken of either as true or false.

In the case of Habermas, as I have already stated, there is an inescapably intertwined connection between the conceptions of meaning and truth. In his attempt to develop a pragmatic account of meaning, I can argue, Habermas becomes interested in sharing the insights of truth- conditional semantics which considers understanding an utterance as knowledge of the conditions under which a hearer may accept it. Here the major purpose of Habermas, I think, is that he wishes to hold on to the connection between meaning and truth. He uses truth in the sense of a context-transcendent concept of validity.

In my account, although both philosophers agree that there is an essential relationship between the notions of meaning and truth, it does not seem to me that their views of both meaning and truth are the same. I can add that Wiredu seems to restrict his notion of meaning to a word or a series of words whereas Habermas seems to go beyond this and incorporates an utterance in general into his discussion.

## CHAPTER TWO

### AN EXPOSITION ON SOME SELECTED PHILOSOPHERS' CONCEPTIONS OF God AND A CRITICAL RESPONSE

#### 2.1 Arguments for the Existence of God

In our concerns with philosophical enterprise, we can obviously see that philosophy raises many fundamental questions that matter in the course of the life of mankind and the universe around him. The questions posed by this enterprise are usually the most general ones and hence attempts made to address them are likewise general ones. In other words, philosophical questions are really the big questions which in their very nature demand great reflections in order to be addressed.

Consequently, in this connection, it is stated:

*There are certain big questions about life and this universe that human beings ever have struggled with and to which they feel they must have some kind of satisfactory answer. Human beings have not only the obvious physiological and psychological needs but also philosophical needs. Simply put, these involve the desire to have some understanding of what it is all about, as Alfred North Whitehead said in defining philosophy. People want to know why they are here, why they suffer, where they are going, and whether there is any meaning and purpose in their lives and in this universe. Some fundamental questions human beings have raised and sought to answer in relation to these philosophical needs concern the existence of God, the freedom of man,... the nature of truth, ( and so forth). Ideas men have held about God, freedom, and truth have mattered so much to them.<sup>90</sup>*

Hence as we can easily make note of from the above-given passage, human beings do have some fundamental needs such as basic physical necessities, psychological demands and philosophical needs. Apropos of philosophical questions, among many others, human beings have posed and fancied to reply to the questions as to whether God exists. Simply put, the questions of the existence of God and an attempt to formulate several arguments that would prove there exists God have been made several times. Many philosophers such as St. Augustine, St. Anselm, St.

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<sup>90</sup> See Thomas Ellis Katen, *Doing philosophy* (New York: Prentice- Hall, Inco., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1973) ,p.308.

Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, Berkeley, and so forth have undertaken this duty in their philosophical works from their respective perspectives.

Among arguments formulated for the existence of God, three classical and basic philosophical answers for the existence of God are known as the ontological argument, the cosmological argument, and the teleological argument. Now let me commence my exposition with the famous argument known in the history of philosophy as the ontological argument.

### 2.1.1 St. Anselm's Ontological Argument

Here, we may recall that it was in eleventh century England that St. Anselm (1033-1109 C.E.) gave explicit formulation to the ontological argument for the existence of God in his work *Proslogium*. We may also remember that Anselm was a priest and the archbishop of Canterbury. Now, before formulating the argument, let us try to see the etymological meaning of the term 'ontology.' "[The word 'ontology' comes from the Greek word] for **being** (or which means) the study of ultimate being or ultimate reality".<sup>91</sup> And in the *Glossary* of the same book, it is briefly defined that ontological argument for the existence of God: "*The thesis that if one knows the word God he cannot deny His existence without contradiction. God is that Being than which none greater can be conceived. The greatest Being must be a perfect Being, and perfection includes existence. Hence it is a contradiction to say God is the greatest perfect Being but does not exist.*"<sup>92</sup>

So, as presented here, the term ontological has to do explicitly with **being**, or *what there is* in the most general sense. And as depicted in the above quote, it is obvious that the very understanding of the existence of God proceeds from the very knowledge of the definition of the term God. It thus seems that if a person knows how the word or the idea of God is defined, he thereby understands that God exists, and thus such a person cannot deny the existence of God without contradiction. This simply means, in my opinion, that once a person understands that *God is that Being than which none greater can be conceived*, then it is necessary that he knows God exists by virtue of the comprehension of that definition.

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, P.359

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

In this regard, it is again presented in the *Glossary of The Great Conversation* that “[the] ontological argument [involves] an argument for God’s existence that proceeds solely from an idea of what God is, from his *essence*.”<sup>93</sup> Thus as clearly set forth by Melchert, the ontological argument begins with a rather abstractly stated expression of “*the idea of God, a definition, if you like, of what we have in mind when we use the word “God.” God, says Anselm, is that, than which no greater can be conceived.*”<sup>94</sup>

This expression demonstrates that God is something than which we cannot conceive anything greater. As I saw it, even, according to Melchert, the ontological formulation that ‘God is that, than which no greater can be conceived’ is not equivalent to the expression that ‘God is the greatest being we can conceive’ for the reason that, Melchert thinks, Anselm does not want the idea of God to be limited by what we may be able to conceive and a conception of God that may be entirely comprehensible to us.

Besides, as it has been pointed out already, the contradiction that is said to be implied, as to Anselm, when one rejects the existence of God is presented as indicated here:

*You cannot even conceive that God does not exist. You can, of course, say the words, “There is no God;” but, Anselm says, you cannot clearly think what they (the words) mean without falling into contradiction. What is contradictory cannot possibly be true. [So]...It follows not only that God does exist but also that it is impossible that (He) does not. Here is an analogy. You can say that one plus one equals three, but you cannot conceive that it is true. If you understand what one is and what three is, and if you understand the concepts of addition and equality, then you cannot possibly believe or even understand that one plus one equals three. To try to do so would be like trying to believe that three both is three and also is not three (but two).*<sup>95</sup>

We hence realize from this passage that it is really impossible to conceive of the nonexistence of God without falling into contradiction as far as Anselm is concerned. In the case of the analogy given, it is necessarily false that three both is and is not three. This analogy likewise demonstrates that it is necessarily false that *that, than which no greater can be conceived does not exist*. Melchert’s exposition of Anselm’s view of God’s existence then shows that to try to

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<sup>93</sup> See Norman Melchert, *The Great Conversation: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Mountain view (?): Mayfield Publishing Company, 1995), P. 646

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, P.253

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.

believe it is true is like trying to believe that *that, than which not greater can be conceived* both does exist (since it is that, than which no greater can be conceived) and does not exist. But as we can see, logically speaking, you cannot believe both. Hence, you must believe that He does exist. Besides, in this connection, we happen to view that you cannot even conceive that God does not exist. This simply implies, in Melchert's view of Anselm's ontological argument, that God should not exist is as impossible as that one plus one should equal three.

Thus, the point clearly set forth by Melchert is that Anselm formulates the ontological argument for the existence of God which conclusively demonstrates that not only God exists, but that He exists so truly that we cannot even conceive that He does not. Furthermore, we can see in the line of the thought of this argument until we reach the conception *that, than which no greater can be conceived*, we have not yet thought of the right conception of what God is. Hence for Anselm, when we use the word "God", we should be clearly sure that we reach that conception just expressed, in my opinion.

As we already observed, Anselm's ontological argument relies on the analysis of the meaning of the word 'God'. In this sense, it is depicted:

*... The term God refers to that being than which none greater can be conceived. If one accepts that definition, then one cannot reject the existence of God, for if God is that being who is greater than any of which we can conceive, it follows that as a very minimum He must be. For how could He be greatest Being there is if He was not? That which exists in objective reality (or actuality) is surely greater than that which exists merely as an idea in the mind. If God is the greatest being, He must be (must exist); otherwise any thing that exists, even a cockroach, would be greater. The greatest being is perfect, but it would be quite an imperfection if He did not even exist. Thus the very conception of the greatest conceivable being implies His existence.<sup>96</sup>*

Here it is stated by Katen that Anselm lashed out at or severely criticized anyone who would admit he could conceive of God but would fail to see that such a conception implied His existence. Nonetheless, the soundness of Anselm's ontological argument has been intensively objected to or criticized by some thinkers such as Gaunilo (Anselm's contemporaneous monk at the Monastery of Marmoutier), Kant (a German Philosopher), Aquinas (the medieval Christian Philosopher 1225-74), and others from their respective perspectives.

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<sup>96</sup> Thomas Ellis Katen, *Doing Philosophy* (New York: Prentice- Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1973 ),P.309.

But here insofar as the major purpose of my study will not be to discuss the objections put forward by Gaunilo, Aquinas, and Kant to Anselm's ontological argument, I do not need to saddle myself with this issue. But rather what I am going to do in this respect is to observe the usefulness of the implications of Wiredu's notion of knowledge of existence so as to know the existence of God.<sup>97</sup> As I have already pointed out, Aquinas was also one of the famous thinkers who recognized the weakness of Anselm's ontological argument and he had thus felt the need to discover new logical proofs for the existence of God.

### 2.1.2 St. Thomas Aquinas's Argument

Thomas Aquinas was born near Naples in 1225 C.E. (in Italy) and died at the relatively young age of forty-nine in 1274. We know that he is one of the great Christian philosophers and also primarily a theologian. So far we have attempted to see how St. Anselm tried to account for the existence of God. As I have already pointed out, though Thomas is also familiar with Anselm's argument for God's existence, he is among those who do not think it a good argument. Basically he thinks that there are other arguments that could prove God's existence. But Thomas seems to hold that Anselm's way to this issue is the wrong sort of argument.

Regarding the problematic nature of knowing God's existence on the basis of Anselm's ontological argument, as conceived by Aquinas, Melchert States:

*...Anselm's argument begins with the assumption that we have a grasp of what God is – of the "essence" of God, as Thomas would put it. But that is not something we can assume. What God is must be filled in by... revelation just as much as that God is. For we do not have an intuition of intelligible realities; we cannot just grasp concepts out of the air. Since we are rational animals, all our knowledge must start from-though it may lead us beyond- the senses. And the senses do not inform us directly about the nature of God.<sup>98</sup>*

As we can easily make note of Aquinas's contention, the assumption that we, human beings, are capable of conceiving of the "essence" of God in its fullest sense cannot be accessible by means of human reason, and what matters could be what Aquinas terms as "divine revelation" based on

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<sup>97</sup> This task will be discharged in this chapter under the heading of 2.2 Wiredu's philosophical treatment of knowing God's existence...

<sup>98</sup> Norman Melchert, *The Great Conversation: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Mountain View (?): Mayfield Publishing Company, 1995), P. 257.

the light of faith. But what we evidently understand in his view is that all our knowledge needs to start from the sense organs though Aquinas accepts that human beings convert sense experience into concepts by a process of abstraction, which is a capacity of rational minds different from other non-human animals. Melchert also attempts to make known that in answer to the question “Whether God Can Be Known in This Life by Natural Reason?” Aquinas says:

*Our natural knowledge begins from sense. Hence our natural knowledge can go as far as it can be led by sensible things. But our intellect cannot be led by sense so far as to see the essence of God; because sensible creatures are effects of God which do not equal the power of God, their cause. Hence from the knowledge of sensible things the whole power of God cannot be known; nor therefore can His existence be seen. But because they are His effects and depend on their cause, we can be led from them so far as to know of God whether He exists, and to know of Him what must necessarily belong to Him, as the first cause of all things, exceeding all things caused by Him.*<sup>99</sup>

So we by now happen to see that Aquinas is no longer interested in Anselm’s ontological argument whose central point in effect says that the existence of God is self-evident to us. That is, if you understand the definition that, ‘that, than which no greater can be conceived,’ then you will see it is true that God exists. However, Aquinas is very strongly against this claim. For him, the existence of God is thus not self-evident to mankind. But rather it may be self-evident in itself or to God Himself, since we cannot know the essence of God.

In this regard, Melchert tries to set forth Thomas Aquinas’s claim by saying: “... *Something is self-evident if all you need to do in order to see that it is true, is to understand it...[However, God’s existence is not self-evident to us in the sense just expressed]... And the reason is that we get our concepts and our knowledge by abstraction from our experience, and experience does not contain any direct intuition of the existence of God. So we must go by another path.*”<sup>100</sup> Here obviously speaking, Thomas Aquinas discards the claim of Anselm’s ontological argument. And he, instead of being led by this argument, prefers another path so as to know God’s existence. In this sense, Thomas Aquinas’s preferable means or path is depicted just like this: “*knowledge of God is possible, for although we cannot know the essence of God as He is in Himself, we can*

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<sup>99</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica* I, question 12, article 12, in *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1, ed. Anton C. Pegis (New York: Random House, 1945), 109 directly quoted in the source I have already mentioned under the quotation #97, pp. 257-258.

<sup>100</sup> See again Norman Melchert, *The Great Conversation: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1995, p. 257.

“make use of His effects, either of nature or of grace,” in the place of a definition”.<sup>101</sup> The dimension of my discussion will therefore be involving Aquinas’s aspect of making use of God’s sensible effects of nature.

Consequently, Aquinas draws our attention towards the investigation of natural phenomena so as to best approach the comprehension of God’s existence. And that is why he holds that our arguments for God’s existence appeal to reason through God’s sensible effects, things we can observe. Therefore, we are expected to begin from what we know best, that is, the world that our senses tell us about and proceed by reasoning until we find the cause. Additionally, as Melchert presents, for Thomas Aquinas, we can (rationally) know about God exactly as much as we can know about this cause of all things.

Therefore, let us now proceed to explain Aquinas’s famous and much-discussed arguments for the existence of God. As we can recall, for him, there are five ways or proofs to the existence of God. These are: the argument from motion, the argument from efficient cause, the argument from possibility and necessity, the argument from grades of value in things, and the argument from the governance of the world. These ways of Aquinas are often given the names cosmological and teleological arguments.

Now, let us discuss each of them one by one. As we have already seen the first and more manifest way is *the argument from motion*. It thus states:

*It is certain, and evident to our senses, that in the world some things are in motion. Now whatever is moved is moved by another, for nothing can be moved except it is in potentiality to that towards which it is moved; whereas a thing moves inasmuch as it is in act. For motion is nothing else than the reduction of something from potentiality to actuality. But nothing can be reduced from potentiality to actuality, except by something in a state of actuality. Thus that which is actually hot, as fire, makes wood, which is potentially hot, to be actually hot, and thereby moves and changes it. Now it is not possible that the same thing should be at once in actuality and potentiality in the same respect, but only in different respects. For what is actually hot cannot simultaneously be potentially hot; but it is simultaneously potentially cold. It is therefore impossible that in the same respect and in the same way a thing should be both mover and moved, i.e., that it should move itself. Therefore, whatever is moved must be moved by another. If that by which it is moved be itself moved, then*

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<sup>101</sup> See James A. Diefenbeck, *Wayward Reflections on The History of Philosophy*, ed. (New York: University Press of America, Inc., 1996), p. 122.

*this also must needs be moved by another, and that by another again. But this cannot go on to infinity, because then there would be not first mover, and consequently, no other mover, seeing that subsequent movers move only, inasmuch as they are moved by the first mover; as the staff moves only because it is moved by the hand. Therefore it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, moved by no other; and this everyone understands to be God.*<sup>102</sup>

This lengthy quotation, which describes the first way to knowledge of God's existence, is taken intentionally or purposefully by me because I need a full-fledged exposition of the idea of this argument without any attempt of summarizing and then presenting it. Though this quotation may be in some sense self-explanatory, let me try to illustrate some of the major ideas involved in it. Hence, the first thing to note is the notion of motion. Melchert states that the interpretation Aquinas gives to "motion" does not mean just change of place, though that is included. It thus seems that "motion" includes change of all kinds or, any forms of change.

For example, in the above-given quotation, the example of fire heating wood shows not just a change of place but rather it is a change from actually being cold, though potentially hot, to actually being hot. This is what Thomas seems to say by "motion," though it also includes a motion involving change of place as only one of such kind. Melchert, in this regard, presents what Aquinas understands by change as: "*change is understood to be an alteration in something, by which it becomes actually what it was until then only potentially.*"<sup>103</sup> So, one can say that Aquinas's notion of motion need not be totally reduced to a motion involving only change of place as opposed to, in my thought, Newton's second law of motion in physics which roughly states that when a force  $F$  is exerted on an object having a mass  $M$ , and then causes it to move in some direction, it is thus said that the motion (i.e., which involves a change of place, in my opinion) takes place. This case expresses only one aspect of Thomas's notion of motion as far as I am concerned.

Hence, as we can understand from Thomas Aquinas's interpretation, the world is full of such changes or motions, and each of these changes is brought about by something that is, in the appropriate way, as Melchert depicts it, actual. As we can see the wood which is potentially hot does not actualize that potentiality on its own. It therefore takes fire, a thing which is actually

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<sup>102</sup> See Anton C. Pegis (ed., with an Introduction), *Introduction to Saint Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Random House, 1948), p. 25.

<sup>103</sup> See Norman Melchert's *The Great Conversation: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1995, p. 258.

hot, to make the wood hot too or simply which heats the wood. In this regard, Melchert tries to make explicit that since the wood cannot be simultaneously actually hot and only potentially hot (actually cold), it cannot make itself hot. This way is meant, I think, to lead us to a first mover, which is a source of all changes.

Consequently, Melchert presents how we can be led to arrive at a first mover as indicated below:

*We must think, not of a temporal series, but of nested sets of necessary conditions. A necessary condition for the wood's becoming hot is the presence of something actually hot. A necessary condition of that is something else in appropriate ways actual and so on. That set of conditions cannot be infinite. There must be some condition that is itself sufficient to account for the rest, without requiring another condition beyond itself. This would be a "first" mover. And that, Aquinas says, is what "every one understands to be God."<sup>104</sup>*

I think that this passage summarizes what Aquinas means by the first way (the argument from motion) to God.

The second and also very central way of St. Thomas to God is that of *causation or the nature of efficient cause*. This argument from efficient causality is thus directly presented by Melchert as follows:

*In the world of sensible things we find there is an order of efficient causes. There is no cause known (neither is it, indeed, possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Now in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity, because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate cause, whether the intermediate cause be several, or one only. Now to take away the cause is to take away the effect. Therefore, if there be no first cause among efficient causes, there will be no ultimate, nor any intermediate, cause. But if in efficient causes it is possible to go on to infinity, there will be no first efficient cause, neither will there be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient causes; all of which is plainly false. Therefore it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name of God.<sup>105</sup>*

As we can observe from this passage, in my opinion, things must be produced or caused by something because they do not cause themselves. We can understand that in order for anything to produce or cause itself, it would have to exist before itself or to preexist itself so that it would

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p.259.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., pp. 259-260.

bring itself into being or it could be its own cause. But that is absurd or impossible, or that makes no sense because a thing cannot exist before it exists.

Hence, all events have some cause. And something which causes or produces an event must itself have another cause, and so on. However, this entire series of cause and effect must not go on infinitely because Aquinas would seem to me to maintain that if series of dependencies were infinite, there would be no cause that is first. This indicates simply that there must be some point where this entire series of dependencies stops, and thus a first cause or an uncaused cause an absolute which explains everything, can be arrived at.

In this sense, Melchert depicts that, "... A "first" cause would be that on which the existence of the whole causal order depends, while it depends on nothing beyond itself. Take away this first cause,...(then) there would be no intermediate cause, nor any ultimate effects. But, as we see, there are causes and effects. So these must be a first cause (i.e., God)." <sup>106</sup> This is, in fact, how Aquinas understands the way we reach the point of a first cause. Katen also adds that, "... [According to Thomas], nothing could be happening in our universe now had not our universe at some point come into being... Thus there must be an absolute, an ultimate force, which causes all else but is of such a nature that no cause is required to explain it. This St. Thomas understands as God". <sup>107</sup>

Having said this much apropos of the second way, let us see the next way. The third way is taken from possibility and necessity, and runs thus. So, this argument from possibility and necessity states:

*We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be, since they are found to be generated, and to be corrupted, and consequently, it is possible for them to be and not to be. But it is impossible for these always to exist, for that which can not-be at some time is not. Therefore if everything can not-be, then at one time there was nothing in existence. Now if this were true, even now there would be nothing in existence, because that which does not exist begins to exist only through something already existing. Therefore, if at one time nothing was in existence, it would have been impossible for anything to have begun to exist, and thus even now nothing would be in existence-which is absurd. Therefore, not all beings are merely possible, but there must exist*

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., P. 250.

<sup>107</sup> See Thomas Ellis Katen, *Doing Philosophy* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1973), P.311.

*something the existence of which is necessary. But every necessary thing either has its necessity caused by another, or not. Now it is impossible to go on to infinity in necessary things which have their necessity caused by another, as has been already proved in regard to efficient causes. Therefore we cannot but admit the existence of some being having of itself its own necessity, and not receiving it from another, but rather causing in others their necessity. This all men speak of as God.*<sup>108</sup>

As we can see from this immediately above-explained quotation, Thomas says that we can observe or experience the existence of both merely possible things and that of necessary beings in nature. In the course of his attempt to show that there must be necessary being, he begins his claim with the fact that all of the objects or things we see around us exist only as a matter of possibility. In this regard, Melchert tries to define, in his presentation of Thomas's view, a merely possible being as: "... a being that is found to be generated, and to be corrupted."<sup>109</sup> Here we can have various sorts or examples of these beings which are fundamentally characteristic of the terrestrial spheres such as plants, animals including human beings, mountains, rivers including its inhabitants or aquatic life, and the like as far as I understand in Melchert's discussion. These merely possible beings and the like are highly susceptible to change since there was a time when they did not exist, and they begin to exist or to be generated at some time, and then they eventually disappear or cease again to exist or they will finally be corrupted.

As Melchert tries to set forth, this change or corruption takes place essentially, not accidentally, within these merely possible beings. What he just means is: "...Merely possible beings are beings that can change essentially- that is, they can change from what they are into something else. They can appear and disappear."<sup>110</sup> Accordingly, these objects or things do not contain the explanation of their existence within themselves. To put it in other words, as Melchert holds, merely possible beings depend or rely for their existence upon necessary beings.

Now we happen to see what Thomas designates as necessary beings or things. As we have already seen in the above discussion, there cannot just be merely possible beings. In this respect, as Melchert tries to depict Thomas's argument: "...Since merely possible beings have an inherent

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<sup>108</sup> See Daniel Kolak and Raymond Martin (eds.), *The Experience of Philosophy*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York : Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1996), pp.220-221.

<sup>109</sup> Norman Melchert, *The Great Conversation: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1995, p. 261

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

*tendency to disappear, if these were the only beings, they would eventually all disappear. And there would be nothing in existence. In fact, this would already have happened. But if this had ever happened, then nothing would exist now because from nothing comes nothing.”*<sup>111</sup>

Now, as a matter of fact, a great many things exist in the universe. From this fact, we can go on to argue that not all things, as Aquinas holds, are merely possible. This implies that, as to him, at least something must be a necessary being whose essence does not naturally tend to disappear or vanish at one time. Now Thomas states that some necessary beings may have their necessity given to them by other necessary beings. But, as Melchert presents, for reasons similar to those given in the first two proofs, this process of necessity-giving cannot go on to infinity.

We can, therefore, see in Melchert’s depiction that, “...*there must be some being which has its necessity ‘of itself’, and which does not owe that to any other being. This being does not depend on any thing beyond itself for its properties of being ungenerable and incorruptible. This being is in itself eternal and necessary in the most proper sense of the word. And this being, as Thomas says, “all men speak of as God.”*<sup>112</sup> This is all about the third proof of God’s existence as far as my study of Aquinas’s argument is concerned.

Aquinas’s fourth way or proof is taken from grades of value or simply from the gradation to be found in things in our experience. This also states:

*Among beings there are some more and some less good, true, noble, and the like. But more and less are predicated of different things according as they resemble in their different ways something which is the maximum, as a thing is said to be hotter according as it more nearly resembles that which is hottest; so that there is something which is truest, something best, something noblest, and consequently, something which is most being, for these things that are greatest in truth are greatest in being, as it is written in *Metaph. II*. Now the maximum in any genus is the cause of all in that genus, as fire, which is the maximum of heat, is the cause of all hot things... Therefore there must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call God.*<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., pp. 262.

<sup>113</sup> Anton C. Pegis (ed., with an Introduction), *Introduction To Saint Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Random House, 1948), pp. 26-27.

As we can see, this fourth proof rests on the argument from the gradation of things. Some thinkers such as Stumpf and Fieser prefer to call it proof from perfection since it seems to revolve around the degrees of perfection that we see in things. Here the point seems to me that there is value difference among things, and hence they do not have the same value, comparatively speaking. And this is explicitly expressed in the above quotation. Here on the basis of comparative judgments, as Melchert presents, something is better than another thing to the extent that it more closely resembles the best. Furthermore, he adds that something is truer if it is more like the truth and so on. In this sense, we can simply understand that the comparison of values found in the things is possible or makes sense only with respect to the resemblance or closeness in their different ways to something that is the maximum. For example, as already mentioned in the quotation, fire is taken as the maximum of heat and hence is the cause of all hot things (it does not matter whether there is something else which is the maximum of all hot things other than fire, but let us assume the notion of the maximum for the convenience of our discussion).

Likewise, we can experience consequently the existential difference of the degree of beings. We can say about things that they have more or less beings, or a lower or higher form of being. For example, the very ordinary example of comparing a rational creature or human being with an insentient thing like a stone can easily make evident this difference in terms of their degrees of being. Thus Thomas maintains that there must also be something which is most being.

In this regard, Melchert depicts Thomas's contention by saying:

*...If there were not in existence a superlative degree of goodness (like something which is best), of truth (like something truest), and so on, and consequently of being (something which is most being), the existence of any lesser degree would be inexplicable. So there must be a "maximum" best, noblest, truest, and so on. But since the lower degrees actually exist, the maximum must also really exist. This maximum is what explains the fact that we observe all these degrees of goodness in things. This maximum "best" of all things, Thomas says, "we call God."<sup>114</sup>*

The fifth and last proof of Aquinas relies on the argument from the governance of the world. According to this proof:

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<sup>114</sup> Norman Melchert, *The Great Conversation: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd ed., 1995 p. 262.

*We see that things which lack knowledge, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain that best result. Hence it is plain that they achieve their end, not fortuitously but designedly. Now whatever lacks knowledge cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is directed by the archer. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; this being we call God.*<sup>115</sup>

As to this fifth argument, which is often called the teleological argument or the argument from design (as for instance Melchert calls it), its idea seems to me that when we carefully observe the universe around us it seems that it is so harmoniously coordinated, so well planned, so well ordered, and hence so well designed that one can therefore judge that it must be the result of a planner or a designer. It seems, one can add, that this is a purposeful universe. As we can see, Thomas maintains that all things such as, in my opinion, for example, parts of the natural world both rational and irrational or which do not possess intelligence or knowledge aim at some end or best purpose. For example, Melchert adds, regarding human beings that we plant and harvest and store so that we will have food in the winter when we know there will be none to gather. But this activity is not too surprising in the case of human being since we can look ahead to a situation that does not now exist and take certain measure to overcome it satisfactorily.

What is rather surprising is that other non-rational or non-intelligent creatures tend to do the same thing or to achieve the same end suitable for their survival as human beings do. In this regard, Melchert gives some instance by saying:

*...Rabbits are quick so that they can escape foxes. Foxes are cunning so that they can catch rabbits. Moths are camouflaged to escape predators. And so on. Everything happens as though it were planned to happen that way. But we cannot believe that rabbits, moths, foxes (and so on) are doing that planning. Someone else must be doing it for them. Here is an analogy. People sometimes wonder whether computers are intelligent. Computers can certainly do some remarkable things: solves problems, rotate images in three dimensions on a screen, guide spacecraft. A standard reply is that though computers look intelligent, but the intelligence they display is not their own, but that of their designers and programmers. They have a "borrowed" intelligence.*<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> See Daniel Kolak and Raymond Martin (eds.), *The Experience of Philosophy*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, 1996, p.222.

<sup>116</sup> Norman Melchert, *The Great Conversation: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1995, p.263.

Hence, the key point of this argument is that it is an intelligent being that acts purposefully and consequently, those non-intelligent naturally existing beings that act to obtain the best consequences do not themselves direct their way to this end. Therefore, Thomas claims that there must be some intelligent being existing that helps all natural things direct their act to obtain the best end, and it is this being we speak of as God.

Here what I would like to remark is that my study will be partly concerned with Wiredu's epistemology. As a part of this study, Wiredu's idea of knowledge of existence is to be particularly addressed, and consequently, as I have already pointed out apropos of Anselm's ontological argument, my aim is to discuss the arguments advanced by these philosophers, including Descartes, and then to demonstrate that I have come up with a new version of argument that does account for the knowledge of God's existence on the basis of the implications of Wiredu's idea of knowledge of existence. This will be done in the course of the forthcoming discussion. But now let me proceed to expose Descartes's idea of God's existence.

### **2.1.3 Rene Descartes's Argument**

Descartes was born March 31, 1596 in a small town in Touraine called La Haye (now called La Haye-Descartes or simply Descartes) in France and died on February 11, 1650 due to the disease of pneumonia as works on the history of philosophy show. As we may recall, one of the major philosophical problems of Descartes had been the question of epistemological foundation whereby he asks to give him an unshakeable foundation so as to establish his entire philosophy upon it, and consequently, to move the whole world. In his strenuous attempts to establish this firm foundation, Descartes employs his methodical doubt where he sets out to know whether there would remain anything undoubtable, and consequently to take that thing to be the unshakeable and indubitable foundation of philosophy.

Consequently, after a lengthy application of this methodical doubt, and the subjection of so many things to doubt, Descartes seems to declare to have arrived at a first instance of knowledge that he perceives to be no longer subject to any kind of uncertainty, doubt, and falsity. This sort of indubitable and immutable knowledge, as we recall it, is Descartes's designation of himself simply as a thing or a substance that thinks, meaning a thing that doubts, affirms, denies, understands a few things, is ignorant of many things, wills, and so forth as explicated by him.

This notion, in sum, is: "... *Descartes's cogito ergo sum [which might better have been formulated: ego sum cogitans] [which] affirms precisely, and nothing more than, the existence of himself who is now thinking.*"<sup>117</sup>

Regarding this point of certainty (i.e., I think, therefore I am), Descartes maintains: "... *Noticing that this truth – I think, therefore I am- was so firm and so certain that the most extravagant suppositions of the skeptics were unable to shake it, I judged that I could accept it without scruple as the first principle of the philosophy I was seeking.*"<sup>118</sup> We can overtly notice that the contention 'I think, therefore I am' was doubtless taken by Descartes to be the firm epistemological foundation, and consequently, the first principle of his philosophy one might then proceed to question an appropriate function of Cartesian cogito, and an answer thus offered in Keeling's depiction of Descartes is: "... *Its proper function is to determine the fundamental situation from which strict knowledge is to begin and to render definitive the context from which further strict knowledge can be developed.*"<sup>119</sup>

Furthermore, having really secured this foundation, Descartes would still seem to ask another question. As already explicated, Descartes is certain that he is a thinking thing or substance. In this first knowledge, he maintains that what he is sure about is nothing but a certain clear and distinct perception or grasp of what he affirms. And the subsequent question he raises is pertinent to the issue of the sufficiency of this clear and distinct grasp or perception of a thing. He accordingly argues that, "... *Yet this (grasp) would hardly be enough (would not suffice) to make (render) me certain of the truth of a thing, if it could ever happen that something that I perceived (grasped) so clearly and distinctly were false.*"<sup>120</sup>

With this important background in our minds, which has a lot to do with my forthcoming discussions, let me proceed to consider Descartes's argument for the existence of God. Consequently, if we read Descartes's famous philosophical work *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, we shall see that he mainly addresses or devotes his *Third and*

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<sup>117</sup> See S.V. Keeling, *Descartes*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, Oxford, and New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 97-98.

<sup>118</sup> See Rene Descartes trans. by Donald A. Cress, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Indianapolis/ Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), p. 19.

<sup>119</sup> S.V. Keeling, *Descartes*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1968, p. 100.

<sup>120</sup> Rene Descartes trans. by Donald A. Cress, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1993, p. 70.

*Fifth Meditations*, though he also raises this issue in other *Meditations*, to the question concerning God's existence. As we may recall it, in the *Third Meditation*, Descartes's principal argument consists in proving the existence of God, and in the case of the *Fifth Meditation*, it is in addition to an explanation of corporeal nature or the essence of material things that the existence of God is also demonstrated again by means of a new proof (i.e., the ontological argument).

Besides, Descartes envisages that so many obscurities and several difficulties may perhaps have arisen or remained undiscussed in the meditations in question. But, in this case, he hoped he will later address these problems in his *Replies to objections*. In the case of the *Third Meditation*, Descartes, for example presents one such point of contention, among others, as follows:

*How can the idea that is in us of a supremely perfect being have so much objective reality that it can only come from a supremely perfect cause? This is illustrated in the **Replies** by a comparison with a very perfect machine, the idea of which is in the mind of some craftsman. For, just as the objective ingeniousness of this idea ought to have some cause (say, the knowledge possessed by the craftsman or by someone else from whom he received this knowledge), so too, the idea of God which is in us must have God himself as its cause.*<sup>121</sup>

Here it is clearly evident that Descartes attempts to give us certain example of some of the objections or contentions that might be posed in relation to some of the ideas he discussed in the *Meditations*, and how he thus later tries to give the reply to this and other similar objections in his *Replies to Objections*.

In connection to this, it is said that Descartes's proofs for the existence of God are found in his works of part four of *the Discourse*, *the Third and Fifth Meditations*, the Appendix to *the Second Replies* and the first part of *the Principles*.<sup>122</sup> For the sake of our brief information, let me say few words on the intent with which Descartes tried to prove or demonstrate the existence of God on the basis of the philosophical argument. As I read it, he begins his work *Meditations on First Philosophy* with sending greetings to those famous people of his time by saying: 'To those most Wise and Distinguished Men, the Dean and Doctors of the Faculty of Sacred Theology of Paris.'

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<sup>121</sup> Rene Descartes trans. by Donald A. Cress, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1993, p. 55.

<sup>122</sup> See Jorge Secada, *Cartesian Metaphysics: The Late Scholastic Origins of Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 291.

In this message, he wanted them to understand the plan of his undertaking or what he had sought to achieve in this work. Consequently, Cress directly presents that Descartes had always thought the issues of God and the soul to be chief among those that ought to be demonstrated with the aid of philosophy rather than theology. Descartes, in this sense, tried to make explicit the people whom his intention in this work had targeted. And he thus argues that although it suffices for us believers to believe by faith that the human soul does not die with the body, and that God exists, certainly no unbelievers seem capable of being persuaded of any religion until these two issues are first proven to them by natural reason.

Having made explicit his target, let us now see Descartes's definition or understanding of God:

*... By the name God I understand a substance that is infinite (eternal, immutable), independent, all-knowing, all-powerful, and by which I myself and everything else, if anything else does exist, have been created. Now all these characteristics are such that the more diligently I attend to them, the less do they appear capable of proceeding from me alone; hence... we must conclude that God necessarily exists.*<sup>123</sup>

As we can clearly observe, this quote is all about how Descartes rightly conceives or understands of the name God, and hence such attributes as omniscience, omnipotence, infinitude, independence, all-creator, absolute perfection, and so forth do characterize what we mean by the term God in Cartesian idea. As held by so many commentators, and we, ourselves can observe, Descartes advanced, among others, the ontological argument for the existence of God. This ontological proof proceeds directly from consideration of the concept of God to His existence. That means, Descartes obviously claims to proceed straightforwardly from the examination of God's essence or nature to the discovery of His necessary existence. We can find this ontological demonstration of God's existence which more obviously exhibits its essentialist structure in the *Fifth Meditation* of Descartes.

Here, before I proceed to discuss some important points with regard to Descartes's ontological argument, I like to make explicit certain doubts and objections that might be put to his argument at the very outset. Consequently, as depicted by Jorge Secada, it might be argued that God's nature or essence cannot be known by humans, at least not unless human beings be granted the

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<sup>123</sup> See Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: In Which the Existence of God and the Distinction of the Soul from the Body Are Demonstrated* (New York: Classic Books America, 2009), p. 35.

contemplation of God in eternal salvation or in some anticipatory mystical rapture. In this case, Descartes, as presented by Secada, would seem not to deny surely the fact that human minds cannot comprehend God's nature in its fullest sense.

Secada thus depicts: "...Descartes did not propose, nor does the ontological proof require, that divine nature be contemplated as in a beatific vision. Even less did he suggest that the human mind can comprehend God's full essence. He (Descartes) stated unambiguously that there are 'innumerable things in God which I cannot in any way comprehend or perhaps even touch with my thought.'" <sup>124</sup> Hence Secada continues to make explicit what the intention of Descartes's ontological argument was.

Accordingly, he stated that what Descartes did hold is that we can have some understanding of divine essence, sufficient for the ontological argument to go through and for us to be able to refer to God: "[E]ven if we conceive of God only in an inadequate or, if you like, 'utterly inadequate' way, this does not prevent ... our being able truly to assert that we have examined his nature with sufficient clarity, that is, with as much clarity as is necessary to know that his nature is possible and also to know that divine existence belongs to this same divine nature." <sup>125</sup>

Having clarified Descartes's intention of the ontological argument in this general terms, let me proceed to see another equally significant point as the one just discussed above. This point has to do with the idea of God's essence, but with certain distinction of the foregoing discussion of God's essence. Hence Secada sets forth that the view that the idea of God is an idea of His essence involves three points: *[F]irstly, that it is the idea of a possible entity; secondly, that this entity is conceived in terms of properties which it must have, if it exists; and thirdly, that those properties define the entity's being, that is, they define it as a substance possessing the informative attributes which characterize and differentiate it as the thing that it is.* <sup>126</sup>

These points are some of the points that Descartes attempts to address in the *Meditations*. Here I would like to remark that I am beginning the discussion of the ontological argument when I explain the three points above-mentioned. Hence as we clearly note from the quote, for Descartes, firstly, the idea of God is not the idea of an impossible entity (that is, that which could

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<sup>124</sup> Jorge Secada, *Cartesian Metaphysics: The Late Scholastic Origins of Modern Philosophy*, 2000, p. 149.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

be based on false assumption or supposition) but rather of a possible being. There is what Descartes calls false supposition that could be imagined whether such a thing exists or not. For example, among other things, Descartes states that he may imagine a winged horse, although no horse with wings exists, or he may not conceive of a mountain without a valley though there is no such a mountain in the world. In my opinion, the point here is that the case of a winged horse could be false assumption or that the case of the impossibility of being able to conceive of a mountain without a valley, whether the mountain and the valley exist or not in the world, shows simply that they cannot in any way be separable.

However, for Descartes, when it comes to the idea of God's existence, the case turns out to be different. So, he tries to distinguish between what he determines to be false suppositions and the idea of God as indicated here:

*.... [I]n consequence there is a great difference between the false suppositions such as this [for example, a winged horse] and the true ideas born within me, the first and principal of which is that of God. For really I discern in many ways that this idea is not something fictitious, (which is dependent) solely on my thought, but that it is the image of a true and immutable nature; first of all, because I cannot conceive anything but God himself to whose essence existence (necessarily) pertains; in the second place because it is not possible for me to conceive two or more Gods in this same position; and granted that there is one such God who now exists, I see clearly that it is necessary that He should have existed from all eternity, and that He must exist eternally; and finally, because I know an infinitude of other properties in God, none of which I can either diminish or change.<sup>127</sup>*

Consequently, we now apparently happen to determine that Descartes's idea of God is an idea of a possible being on the grounds that he could understand it so clearly and distinctly or even it is an idea which is truly innate in his thought and thus not his own mind's creation or fabrication. In this regard, Descartes repeatedly points out that he is of a nature that his thought does not impose any necessity upon things. In my opinion, he thus seems to claim that it is not by the power of his thought that the existence of God is made necessarily possible.

On the contrary, for him, God's existence is something necessary in itself. Even Descartes clearly holds that it is impossible to conceive of God (that is, a Being supremely perfect) to

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<sup>127</sup> Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: In Which the Existence of God and the Distinction of the Soul from the Body Are Demonstrated*, 2009, p. 56.

whom existence is lacking (that is to say, to whom a certain perfection is lacking). Here therefore it is overt in Descartes's contention that existence is one of the most characteristic attributes of God as far as my understanding is concerned.

In this connection, Descartes's idea of God's existence is very much evident in his thought than any other things do, i.e., for example, it is much more evident than a conception of a winged horse or that of being unable to conceive a mountain without a valley. This matter is manifest in the claim:

*...(F)rom the fact that I cannot conceive a mountain without a valley, it does not follow that there is any mountain or any valley in existence, but only that the mountain and the valley, whether they exist or do not exist, cannot in any way be separated one from the other. While from the fact that I cannot conceive God without existence, it follows that existence is inseparable from Him, and hence that He really exists; not that my thought can bring this to pass, or impose any necessity on things, but, on the contrary, because the necessity which lies in the thing itself, i.e. the necessity of the existence of God determines me to think in this way. For it is not within my power to think of God without existence (that is of a supremely perfect being devoid of a supreme perfection, though it is in my power to imagine a horse either with wings or without wings).<sup>128</sup>*

Here, we can see that I have just tried to make explicit that God, for Descartes, is a possible being and thus that existence necessarily belongs to God's essence.

Secondly, as Secada tries to point out, another important point implied by the view that the idea of God is an idea of His essence is that this being or entity is conceived in terms of properties which it must have, if it exists. So, in this regard, it is evident in the *Meditations* that the idea of God is stated to be the idea of “*a supremely perfect being, a being with all perfections, a substance which is unique, eternal, infinite complete, immutable, independent, omniscient, omnipotent, and good.*”<sup>129</sup> It is particularly in the *Third Meditation* that Descartes offers such an essentialist definition of the word God. In this respect, Secada presents that, for Descartes, the question about the existence of God is not about something we happen to call God but rather it is about that which, if it exists, is God. The above-mentioned properties which are meant to specify the meaning of God provide us with the information about the essence or nature of God. Therefore, they are properties that the being that is God must have. Descartes thus tells us that

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.,p.55

<sup>129</sup> Jorge Secada,*Cartesian Metaphysics:The Late Scholastic Origins of Modern Philosophy*,2000,p.163.

these attributes or properties which are contained in the idea of God (i.e., the first and supreme being) cannot be diminished or removed by him nor does he change or alter any of them.

Finally, there remains the point that those properties which define the entity's being (that is, they define it as a substance possessing the informative attributes which characterize and differentiate it) as the thing that it is. Regarding this point, Secada depicts that Descartes first of all tries to compare the idea of God with the ideas of shapes and of numbers (i.e., in my opinion, the mathematical truths of which he is sure to be true) and then proceeds to write that, "...'*My understanding that it belongs to his nature*' to possess the properties which are contained in that idea 'is no less clear and distinct' than is the case when I prove of any shape or number that some property belongs to its nature."<sup>130</sup> So, this is the way Descartes tries to make explicit how the properties involved or contained in the definition of God's essence can really characterize and thus differentiate or specify this entity's being as the thing that it is.

Additionally, Secada sets forth that Descartes stresses: "*[T]he cohesion of the notion of God: 'the unity, the simplicity, or the inseparability of all the attributes of God is one of the most important perfections which I understand Him to have' ... It is beyond doubt that in (his) view, if any properties define the being of an entity, then the properties contained in the idea of God, which he called 'the truest... of all my ideas,' do.*"<sup>131</sup>

This is all about my discussions of Descartes's ontological argument for knowing the existence of God, and then I am going to treat all the arguments of St. Anselm, St. Thomas Aquinas, and Descartes in the light of Wiredu's view of the knowledge of existence. In this connection, I would like to assure you that St. Anselm's ontological argument and that of Descartes for understanding God's existence are similar because both arguments proceed from the examination of the concept of God to the judgment of his existence though Descartes, as I have already explained, is not fully persuaded by the idea that we can fully comprehend God's essence.

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

Regarding the similarity in question, Keeling depicts:

*In Meditation V (Descartes) gives a demonstration of God's existence, similar to the 'ontological argument' of St. Anselm ... (According to this proof), God is defined as the most perfect being conceivable. Now for such a being not to exist would be for it to lack a 'perfection' or completion. But the most perfect being could not lack any perfection, much less that of existence. So, given the definition of God, the assertion of God's existence could only be denied on pain of self-contradiction.*<sup>132</sup>

Here we can see that Keeling's quote of Descartes sounds exactly like that of St. Anselm which I discussed in the previous section of Anselm's ontological argument. From my previous discussion, we may recall, according to Anselm, no one could possibly deny God's existence, given the definition of God, without having fallen into self-contradiction.

This also holds true for Descartes. This view is overtly explicated in his own terms like this:

*... The idea, I say, of this being who is absolutely perfect and infinite, is entirely true; for although, perhaps, we can imagine that such a being does not exist, we cannot nevertheless imagine that His idea represents nothing real to me ... This idea is also very clear and distinct; since all that I conceive clearly and distinctly of the real and the true, and of what conveys some perfection, is in its entirety contained in this idea.*<sup>133</sup>

This passage already demonstrates the similarity of the views of both philosophers regarding the impossibility of denying God's existence.

In the same work, Descartes adds that the idea of God's existence does not cease to be true although, he tells us, he does not comprehend the infinite or although there is infinitude of things in God which cannot be comprehended. In other terms, infinitude of things in the idea of God cannot even possibly be reached in any way by thought.

In this sense, Descartes goes on to say:

*... [I]t is of the nature of the infinite that my nature, which is finite and limited, should not comprehend it; and it is sufficient that I should understand this, and that I should judge that all things which I clearly perceive and in which I know*

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<sup>132</sup> See S.V.Keeling, *Descartes*(London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1968) ,p.119.

<sup>133</sup> Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy :In Which the Existence of God and the Distinction of the Soul from the Body Are Demonstrated*, 2009,p.36.

*that there is some perfection, and possibly likewise an infinitude of properties of which I am ignorant, are in God formally or eminently, so that the idea which I have of Him may become the most true, most clear, and most distinct of all the ideas that are in my mind.*<sup>134</sup>

Having attempted to discuss Descartes's argument for the existence of God and the similarity of his argument to that of St. Anselm's ontological argument, let me now proceed to see Wiredu's critical response to the arguments advanced by these philosophers, including that of St. Thomas Aquinas.

## **2.2 Wiredu's Philosophical Treatment of Knowing God's Existence as a Critical Response to the Aforementioned Arguments**

By the aforementioned arguments, I simply mean the arguments advanced by Anselm, Aquinas and Descartes that I have already discussed so far. Now under this heading, we happen to view that Wiredu is critical of such arguments. Thus my principal task here is to, critically react to these philosophers' conceptions of knowledge of the existence of God by using the implications of Wiredu's conception of knowledge of existence in general. My central argument here is that Wiredu's idea of the existence of God is different from that of the philosophers in question. Consequently, let me advance my argument, first and foremost, by making explicit Wiredu's philosophical treatment of existence in general. He maintains that, "... *To assert that an object exists is to assert a given term refers to an object (i.e., has a reference). Existence, that is to say, is a relation between a term and an object, not an attribute of an object. Questions of existence thus start with a term, or a description, not with an object.*"<sup>135</sup>

Now we can note the implications of the foregoing clarification of the concept of existence for the ontological argument for the existence of God so long as Wiredu is concerned.

As I have already discussed, both Anselm and Descartes advanced the ontological argument for proving the existence of God. As it has just been explained, the ontological argument is based on the examination and analysis of what God is or the definition of the concept of God (i.e., His essence or nature). And the point here is that it is when one knows the essence of the idea of God or His real attributes that a person is said to have understood there exists God.

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.,pp.36-37.

<sup>135</sup> See Kwasi Wiredu , *Philosophy and an African Culture*(Cambridge University Press, 1980),p.126.

In this regard, St. Anselm defines God ontologically as that being than which no greater can be conceived, which is similar to Descartes's, the most perfect being conceivable. For them, therefore, knowledge of God's existence consists in understanding the correct attributes of the idea of God which essentially characterize Him.

In this respect, Wiredu himself states that, "... *St. Anselm, and Descartes after him, had argued that (the) existence (of God) is logically bound up with the correct conception of God.*"<sup>136</sup> This sort of conception is that of which Wiredu is critical, and he is thus against it. Wiredu, on this view, shares Kant's contention against the consideration of existence as an attribute of objects. Consequently, Wiredu depicts that "...*Kant pointed out that existence is not an attribute of objects.*"<sup>137</sup>

Additionally, Katen sets forth how Kant developed his criticism against, for example, St. Anselm's ontological argument, which considers the very conception of the greatest conceivable being to imply His existence, and consequently an existence to be seen as an attribute of God. Katen thus demonstrates Kant's point as: "... [*For Kant*] *existence is not a predicate. [Katen adds] this means that actual existence can never be taken as a property of definition. One simply cannot define anything into existence. One cannot discover what exists by any analysis of terms. To find what exists one must explore objective reality*".<sup>138</sup>

So, here the point I would like to emphasize from the passage given above is that for both Wiredu and Kant existence is not an attribute of an object, or in Wiredu's terms existence is not logically bound up with the correct conception or understanding of an entity (including God).

Furthermore, I have also already mentioned that St. Thomas Aquinas's conception of God's existence can be, similarly, critically evaluated on the basis of the implications of Wiredu's notion of the knowledge of existence. As we have already seen Aquinas advanced five proofs or ways, namely, the argument from motion, the argument from efficient cause, the argument from possibility and necessity, the argument from the gradation to be found in things, and the argument from the governance of the world which are meant to know the existence of God. The

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<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p.127.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Thomas Ellis Katen, *Doing Philosophy*(New York: Prentice-Hall ,Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey,1973),p.310.

central theme of all these arguments is that in order to know the existence of God we need to proceed from this sensible effects that can be observed in the world. This simply means that we have to start from knowledge of what are observable in the world and then arrive by means of rational deduction at the existence of the first cause, which all men speak of as God.

Clearly speaking, in developing these assumptions, St. Aquinas was initiated by the fact that, “[t]he existence of God is not self-evident to us (though it is self-evident to God himself, since we cannot know the essence of God.”<sup>139</sup> Here we can apparently observe that St. Aquinas’s argument is different from that of both Anselm and Descartes. Nonetheless, Aquinas’s argument too cannot obey Wiredu’s conception of knowledge of existence. In other words, Aquinas’s five ways for knowing God’s existence do defy Wiredu’s notion of the existence of material objects (including God’s) in general. Therefore, Aquinas’s argument has to be criticized altogether with that of Anselm’s and Descartes’s ontological arguments.

Thus, let me present Wiredu’s conclusive argument against the above-mentioned notions of existence as indicated below:

*... My argument is: An attribute of an object must be something which can in principle be affirmed of an object in its presence. Existence cannot in principle be affirmed of an object in its presence. Therefore existence is not an attribute of an object and cannot be logically bound up with the conception of any entity whatever ... [for example], [t]o assert ‘God exists’ is to assert that the term ‘God’ has a reference-i.e. refers to an object. One could not even begin to investigate the claim unless one could obtain an adequate conception of the significance of the term ‘God’ independently of the question of whether it, in fact, has a reference. It follows that, whatever the right conception of God may be, the issue of his existence is logically separate from it.<sup>140</sup>*

In sum, now it is time to claim that I discussed the conceptions of some selected philosophers regarding the issue of comprehending God’s existence, and consequently I attempted to show how Wiredu would critically evaluate and reply to their arguments on the basis of his conception of knowledge of existence in general. Hence, his view here is that to claim to know that God exists has logically nothing to do with the right conception of God or with knowing God’s sensible effects.

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<sup>139</sup> See James A. Diefenbeck, ed.(New York: University Press of America, Inc., 1996),p.123

<sup>140</sup> Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, 1980,p.123.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE IN WIREDU

#### 3.1 Knowledge and Existence

One of the major points of discussion in Wiredu's epistemology is a question of knowledge of existence. In our previous discussion, we have just realized that, for Wiredu, to know an existence of something cannot be logically bound up with the conception of an attribute of that thing. It is thus on the basis of this epistemological matter that Wiredu critically evaluates the arguments advanced by Anselm and Descartes as well as Aquinas for apprehending the existence of God, who relate a question of the existence of God either to His correct conception or His sensible effects, respectively. Now I am in a position to see clearly what Wiredu's notion of knowledge of existence is somehow all about.

In this regard, Wiredu propounds his famous epistemological thesis, viz. '*to be is to be known.*' This idea appears so strange to us, for it raises, in my opinion, a question as to how the mere fact that an object exists makes it knowable without its attributes being comprehended. Wiredu himself also points out that many philosophers and probably all laymen are, or would be, scandalized by this suggestion. Be that as it may, I would like to explain the central argument of this advanced thesis.

By this proposition, Wiredu is especially concerned with the meaninglessness of pointing to a material object and asking whether it exists. He thus wonders what sort of information is expected by an inquirer when he or she points to an object and asks as to whether it exists. He, for example, wants us to consider: "*Imagine that a man pointing to a table were to ask: 'Does this table exist?' what sort of information would he be asking for? We might suppose him to be wondering whether he is dreaming or having a hallucination, or some allied form of perceptual illusion.*"<sup>141</sup> Here, we can note, Wiredu stresses that this kind of question is meaningless because, for him, it seems to me that this sort of question communicates no any new meaningful or sensible message. In this connection, he adds that to point to an object such as a table and say,

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<sup>141</sup> See Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 125.

'The table exists', is tautological. He defines a tautology as "*a sentence which does not impart any information but merely repeats something already presupposed.*" <sup>142</sup>

So, with regard to our case 'The table exists,' Wiredu holds, it might be argued, the mere demonstrative or successful utterance of 'This table' already presupposes the existence of the table so that the assertion that it exists is redundant. However, even if this is the case, in my opinion, Wiredu's conception of knowing the existence of an object still goes beyond this fact of an implied presupposition. In this respect, Wiredu states that this alleged presupposition is itself nothing other than the proposition that *the table pointed to exists*, which must, for the same reason, itself be tautological. He also adds that but this in turn must mean that the existence of the table is already presupposed by the successful demonstrative utterance, and so on. In sum, Wiredu is against even the question of the man in question as to whether he simply wants to know that the table which all people actually see in front of them does exist. At this stage, Wiredu legitimately suggests: "*It does not in general make sense to ask in the presence of a given object whether it exists or not. When we pose a question as to the existence of an object the happiest way of resolving the issue is to be brought face to face with the object.*" <sup>143</sup>

Having spoken of a question of the existence of an object in its presence, let us look at what, for Wiredu, an assertion of existence refers to, and why pointing to an object and asking whether it exists is meaningless: ... "*To assert that an object exists is to assert that a given term refers to an object. Existence, that is to say, is a relation between a term and an object. Questions of existence thus start with a term, or a description, not with an object. Consequently, to ask whether a presented object exists is to put the cart before the horse.*" <sup>144</sup>

By Wiredu's expression of 'putting the cart before the horse', I note the impossibility and meaninglessness of such order of a question. Thus, the point here is that we assert the existence of an object not in its presence. That is why Wiredu states that questions of existence of an object start with a term, or a description, that is to say, with a term's having a reference (i.e., an object of reference). Wiredu then holds, in general terms, that 'Does x exist' has the same meaning as 'Does "x" refer to an object?' where the symbol 'x' here indicates a determinate term. Hence 'to exist' serves only as a means of claiming that a given term has a reference, and it does not then

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., pp. 124-125.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

signify any sort of attribute of an object whatever for him. In simple words, for him, 'to be' ('to exist'), then means 'for a given term "x" to be asserted to refer to some object.

In sum, we can note that Wiredu's thesis that '*to be is to be known*' is equivalent to the idea that to assert the existence of an object and to claim knowledge of it is one and the same thing in a certain minimal sense. To put it in simple terms, Wiredu maintains, to assert the existence of an object is to claim some sort of knowledge of the object. In this connection, Wiredu supposes that some readers may wish to enter an objection. The point here is that having agreed that to assert the existence of an object is to claim some sort of knowledge of the object, some objectors may, but, argue that an object may exist without anybody asserting that it exists. In this sense, we can see that the existence of the object is absolutely independent of anybody's knowledge.

In an attempt to reply to this supposed objection, Wiredu gives to the proposition 'an object may exist' without anybody asserting that it exists the form 'x may exist' without anybody asserting that it exists, where 'x' indicates a certain object. He, then, goes on to say: "*One would not, normally, use the phrase 'x may exist' when one is (epistemologically) in a position to assert 'x exists.'* It is significant that one does not say 'some object x exists without anybody knowing (not to talk of asserting) that it exists.' That would be inconsistent, for, of course, whoever asserted the statement would himself have asserted the existence of the object."<sup>145</sup>

However, in the matter of the relation between knowledge and existence, what Wiredu does rather hold is that it can be asserted quite confidently that there must be a great number of things which actually exist but are not known. For this just foregoing claim, Wiredu provides evidence by saying that this is simply because there are more things in the universe than we have knowledge of. However, regarding the statement 'a thing existing without being known', for him, it is not possible to imagine an example of an object which exists unknown. In my understanding of Wiredu's view, being able to imagine of an example of such object amounts to asserting the existence of the object. In this respect, Wiredu questions: "... *How could we possibly make the existence of that object an example unless we had some knowledge of it?*"<sup>146</sup>

Thus, as I have just already pointed out, Wiredu accepts the proposition that there are more things in the universe than we have knowledge of, and he thus immediately calls for the correct

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

interpretation of this proposition. Hence, for him, the statement that there are more things in the universe than we have knowledge of does not mean that or cannot be interpreted as some specific things x, y, z, exist unknown, because this would be a contradictory suggestion. For him, as we have previously seen, the suggestion that some object x exists without anybody knowing that it exists would be contradictory for whoever asserted the statement would himself or herself have asserted the existence of the object.

On the contrary, the proposition there are more things in the universe than we have knowledge of consists in having to do with an indeterminate existence of things. Consequently, Wiredu suggests that, "... *An assertion of indeterminate existence can only be matched by an equally indeterminate knowledge of the object postulated. The statement that there are more things in the universe than we have knowledge of is essentially an expression of our sense of the open-endedness of human knowledge.*" <sup>147</sup> Here we thus realize that Wiredu believes in an endless exploration, investigation, quest, and so forth of human mind so far as I understand. In this sense, Wiredu hypothetically thought that if we continue our investigations we will encounter new objects. And this hypothetical proposition is meant to connect the existence of objects not as yet determinately known with the present state of knowledge. The point now is that a kind of definiteness of existential assertion of more things in the universe must await future exploration. So, the existence of an object cannot be said to be absolutely independent of human knowledge.

### **3.2 Berkeley's Doctrine of 'Esse Est Percipi' and Wiredu's Critical Suggestions**

As clearly written in the history of philosophy, George Berkeley was born at Kilcrene near Kilkenny in Ireland on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 1685, his family being of English descent, and died peacefully on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1753. Berkeley had written so many important philosophical works, and he was very much well-known for his famous philosophical doctrine of '*esse est percipi*,' which can be translated into English as '*to be is to be perceived*'. This doctrine was put forward in his chief work *A Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, part I, which was published in 1710, and *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, published in 1713.

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

Now the question arises as to what this doctrine implies. This matter is thus presented by Frederick Copleston as:

*... First, when Berkeley says esse est percipi, he is talking only about sensible things or objects. Secondly, the full formula is, esse est aut percipi aut percipire', existence is either to be perceived or to perceive. Besides sensible 'unthinking' things, the existence of which consists in being perceived, there are minds or percipient subjects, which are active and whose existence is to perceive rather than to be perceived.<sup>148</sup>*

Copleston states that, in *The Principles*, Berkeley speaks of sensible things as collections or combinations of 'sensations or ideas', and draws the conclusion that they cannot exist than in a mind perceiving them. So, here, we can evidently see that sensible objects of our knowledge are ideas. In this regard, Berkeley points out:

*It is evident to any one who takes a survey of the objects of human knowledge, that they are either ideas (1) actually imprinted on the senses, or else such as are (2) perceived by attending to the passion and operations of the mind, or lastly (3) ideas formed by help of memory and imagination, either compounding, dividing, or barely representing those originally perceived in the aforesaid ways.<sup>149</sup>*

In this case, Berkeley claims that he has the ideas of lights and colours , with their several degrees and variations, by sight; he perceives hard and soft, heat and cold, motion and resistance, and of all these more and less either as to quantity or degree, by touch. He also argues that he is furnished with odors through smelling, the palate with tastes, and hearing conveys sounds to the mind in all their variety of tone and composition. Hence, we can vividly note that Berkeley explains how we can perceive the knowledge of sensible objects through our sense organs.

According to Copleston's presentation, to perceive is to have an idea. In his view, when, therefore, we perceive colours, for example, we are perceiving ideas, and as these ideas come from without, they are sensations. However, for Berkeley, Copleston depicts, no sensation can be in a senseless thing. Therefore, ideas such as colours cannot inhere in material substance, and hence nothing like an idea can be in an unperceiving thing. In Copleston's statement, we can realize that to be perceived implies dependence on a perceiver. Therefore, to show that sensible objects are ideas is one of Berkeley's chief ways of showing the truth of the statement that the

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<sup>148</sup> See Frederick Copleston, S.J., *A History of Philosophy : Vol.iv: Descartes To Leibniz, Vol.v: Hobbes To Hume, Vol.vi: Wolff To Kant*(New York and London :Image Books and Doubleday Press, 1960),pp.220-221.

<sup>149</sup> See Saxe Commins and N.Robert(eds.),*The World's Great Thinkers :Man and Spirit :The Speculative Philosophers*(New York :Random House, Inc., 1947),p.252.

existence of these sensory objects is to be perceived as long as Copleston's depiction is concerned.

As already shown in Copleston's quotation, there are not only unperceiving objects, but there are also active or conscious minds whose existence is to perceive rather than to be perceived. Berkeley, in this regard, maintains: "... [B]esides all that endless variety of ideas or objects of knowledge, there is likewise something which knows or perceives them, and exercises divers operations, as willing, imagining, remembering about them. This perceiving, active being is what I call mind, spirit, soul or myself."<sup>150</sup>

Thus, clearly speaking, sensory objects are ideas and the existence of an idea, for Berkeley, consists in being perceived. This implies that the various sensations or ideas of sensible objects imprinted on the sense cannot exist otherwise than or without in a mind perceiving them. However, as to this matter, Berkeley envisages that it is indeed strangely prevailing amongst men that houses, mountains, rivers and in a word all sensible objects, have an existence, natural or real, distinct from their being perceived by the understanding. In my opinion, this foregoing objection could be held by nearly all men who do not get Berkeley's position. As I understand it, this objection consists in exclaiming the absolute or independent existence of unthinking or sensible things without any relation to perceiving minds. But at this particular juncture, Berkeley asks with how great an assurance and acquiescence soever this principle may be entertained in the world. Hence, Berkeley states that what is said of the absolute existence of unthinking or unperceiving things without any relation to their being perceived seems perfectly unintelligible.

In this connection, though many people thought otherwise, Berkeley considers that his analysis of existential statements of sensible things is in accordance with the outlook of the plain or ordinary man just as set forth by Copleston. Therefore, according to Berkeley, anyone can have knowledge of the fact sensible things do not and cannot exist independent of being perceived if he attends to the meaning of the term 'exist' when applied to these things. Berkeley, for example, asks what any other meaning the proposition, 'the table exists,' does have than 'the table is perceived or perceivable.'

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<sup>150</sup> See George Berkeley [?] ,*The works of George Berkeley :Bishop of Cloyne, Vol.ii*(London and Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd,1949),pp.41-42.

Let us once consider Wiredu's view of Berkeley's doctrine of 'to be is to be perceived,' as treated in the light of Wiredu's notion of epistemology. In his epistemology, Wiredu stresses that "... it is the existence of an object not the object itself that consists in being known."<sup>151</sup> For Wiredu, when we talk of the existence of an object, as already pointed out so far, we are, in fact, considering a certain relation of a term (or if you like, a concept) to an object. Therefore, he clearly concedes that his position is distinct from the idealism or immaterialism, among others, of Berkeley. Wiredu himself holds that his epistemological view that 'to be is to be known' is distinguished from Berkeley's thesis that 'to be is to be perceived.' According to Wiredu, as it is indeed true, Berkeley held that for sensible (i.e., physical objects), to be is to be perceived.

Here what Wiredu wants to assure us is that this doctrine or thesis is an epistemological rather than an ontological one. This simply means that, for Wiredu, it is one that has to do with our knowledge of objects rather than with the ultimate nature of objects. In this account, Wiredu depicts that actually, Berkeley too, resorts at one stage to epistemological argument on this matter, albeit briefly. Treating of what is meant by the term, 'exists' when applied to sensible things, Berkeley says: "[The] table I write on, I say exists-that is, I see and feel it; and if I were out of my study I should say it existed-meaning thereby that if I was in my study I might perceive it, or some other spirit actually does perceive it."<sup>152</sup>

With respect to Wiredu's exposition, Copelston presents that it is perfectly true to say, as any ordinary man would say, that the table exists when nobody is in the room. But what can this mean, asks Berkeley, save that if I were to enter the room I should perceive that table or that if another person were to enter the room he or she would, or could, perceive that table? As Copleston depicts even if, Berkeley says, I try to imagine the table existing out of all relation to perception, I necessarily imagine myself or someone else perceiving it. That is to say, Berkeley adds, I covertly introduce a percipient subject, though I may not advert to the fact that I am doing so. According to Copleston's depiction, Berkeley can say, therefore, that "*the absolute existence of unthinking things without any relation to their being perceived, that seems perfectly*

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<sup>151</sup> Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p.132.

<sup>152</sup> Berkeley's *Principles of Human Knowledge*, Sec.3. quoted in Kwasi Wiredu, *Ibid.*

*unintelligible. Their esse is percipi, nor is it possible they should have any existence out of the minds or thinking things which perceive them.*"<sup>153</sup>

So, in his depiction, Wiredu stresses Berkeley's view as: "... For, what are the aforementioned objects [i.e., mountains, rivers, table, house, etc.] but things we perceive by sense? And what do we perceive by sense besides our own ideas or sensations? And is it not plainly repugnant that any one of these, or any combinations of them, should exist unperceived?"<sup>154</sup> Therefore, obviously speaking, Berkeley's contention is that to say of a sensible thing or body that it exists is to say that it is perceived or perceivable, and in Berkeley's opinion, this statement can mean nothing else.

Here, as I have already pointed out thus far, the main task of my study will be to expose Wiredu's effort to make critical suggestions on Berkeley's doctrine that 'to be is to be perceived,' because according to Wiredu, in the question of the existence of sensible objects or material things, Berkeley would seem to conflate or mix up the epistemological thesis and the ontological one. Wiredu thus maintains:

*It is thus easy to see why in the matter of the existence of sensible objects Berkeley failed to separate the epistemological thesis that to be is to be perceived from the ontological thesis that sensible objects are sensations. Obviously the latter implies the former. But the converse does not hold. If [sensible] objects are sensations, then, sensations being nothing but a species of awareness or perception, it goes without saying that to say that an object exists is to say that it is perceived. However, from the position that the existence of objects consists in their being perceived—we are for the moment thinking exclusively of sensible objects—it does not follow that the objects are a species of perception; for as already argued, to talk about the existence of objects is not the same as talking of their ultimate constitution.*<sup>155</sup>

It is evident that Berkeley believes that for sensible objects to be is to be perceived. Wiredu even tries to defend this position in a somewhat general form that for anything whatever to be is to be known or apprehended. However, what Wiredu disagrees with Berkeley is that, in arguing for his principle of *esse est percipi*, Berkeley mixed it up with another quite separable thesis to the

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<sup>153</sup> Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy: Vol. iv: Descartes To Leibniz, Vol. v: Hobbes To Hume, Vol. vi: Wolff To Kant*, p.219.

<sup>154</sup> Berkeley's *Principles of Human Knowledge*, Sec.4 quoted in Kwasiri Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, pp.132-133.

<sup>155</sup> Kwasiri Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, 1980, p.133.

effect that to be a physical or sensible object is to be a sensation. Therefore, Wiredu suggests that for sensible objects to be perceived is separable from the doctrine that sensible objects are nothing but sensations.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this part, I would like to provide some major concluding remarks of my research. Accordingly, as I have already argued in the introductory section of the thesis, an expository discussion on Wiredu's view of truth and its defense are the central preoccupation or task of chapter one of my study. So, as I have already pointed out, for Wiredu, truth is nothing but "opinion." Here I have begun my study by identifying the sense in which Wiredu uses the word 'truth' in his discussion. Hence, he proves that there are at least two senses (i.e., moral and cognitive) in which the concept of truth can be used. Thus, in this paper, I showed that, as to Wiredu, an Akan society of Ghana has its own separate terms for the two different senses of the term 'truth,' namely '*anukare* or *nokware*,' for the moral sense, and the phrase '*nea ete saa*,' for the cognitive sense, which can be translated as '*that which is so*.' Thus, in this study, I discussed Wiredu's view of truth in its purely cognitive sense.

And when he states that truth is nothing but opinion, Wiredu calls for our understanding of the word "opinion" in the strict, not the weaker, sense. Hence, Wiredu's use of "opinion" is distinct from our conventional conception of the word. Therefore, I discussed that truth is nothing over and beyond "opinion" in this sense. This simply implies that truth is a view from some specific point. Then, according to Wiredu, truth is joined to point of view.

Nevertheless, in this study, I happened to notice that though Wiredu identifies his view of truth with point of view, he never argues that truth is relative to point of view. He, in fact, believes that points of view are open to rational discussion. As I have already demonstrated they are not windowless monads, incapable of interaction, and stumbling blocks for the processes of rational inquiry, because, for Wiredu, points of view are formulated on the basis of the canons of rational thinking, and hence, are regulated by such canons of rational method such as persuasion, and dialogue accompanied by open-mindedness, mutual understanding, and suchlike elements. The point thus is that these points of view are capable of interaction through the medium of rational discussion for Wiredu.

Hence, in my opinion, it is in the sense just explicated that Wiredu states that truth is a view from some point. Now we happen to note that truth is both personal and objective. Therefore, though Wiredu's truth involves essential reference to personal opinion in the strict sense of the word opinion, it can also become interpersonal, rational, and subsequently objective since it is based on the canons or principles of rational inquiry.

Then the question that arises may have to do with where Wiredu's truth belongs to. He argues, frankly speaking, that "...*Truth, as I believe I have stressed more than once, cannot be said to depend on a point of view- that gives the impression of relativism.*"<sup>156</sup> Thus the point rather is that, as I have already shown, Wiredu's concept of truth belongs to the domain of comparative context or inquiry wherein to be true is to coincide with a corroborative point of view.

Furthermore, as I stated in this study, Wiredu's conception of truth involves essential reference to a personal opinion, and he thus maintains:

*"The conception of truth we have been studying is a beautifully humanistic one, at any rate, in theory. Recognition that truth... involves a point of view should lead one to reflect that the 'truths' which one happens to espouse are not ineluctable and final, and that opposite points of view celebrating opposite 'truths' are in themselves neither evidence of insincerity nor proof of stupidity. To be sure, one is not saying that antithetic points of view are all to be embraced as 'true.' What is implied is that, no one 'truth' being finally self-validating, persuasion is the only rational method of resolving such opposition."*<sup>157</sup>

As one of my major concluding remarks, this above passage by Wiredu makes explicit Wiredu's position of truth and his tendency of deprecating those philosophical positions such as dogmatism, absolutism, conscious or real relativism, and so on. In this regard, I believe that if one appreciates only one's own position while describing others as dogmatic, unreasonable, wrong-headed, etc, he will unknowingly himself become all what are mentioned above. Wiredu also insists that anybody who considers others to be such peoples himself is not standing on any rock of 'Eternal Truth' but on the unsteady platform of his own opinions. Thus, in this thesis I happened to show that if truth were conceived to be something absolute, and beyond opinion, then, on this showing, it would have no relevance to resolve the disagreements of human beings. According to Wiredu, the disagreements of men can in suitable conditions be resolved by

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<sup>156</sup> Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and an African Culture*, 1980, p.203.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p.66.

rational discussion, and to press our opinions as truths transcending personal opinion and to stigmatize opposing opinions as mere opinion is often to display nothing more than self-glorification. To recapitulate Wiredu's view of truth, he states: "... That truth is nothing but opinion is itself nothing but an opinion."<sup>158</sup>

Furthermore, in this study, the discussion of Habermas's idea of a pragmatic theory of meaning and Wiredu's idea of the concept of meaning brought forth one of the most typically praised and shared features in both thinkers. Hence, both Wiredu and Habermas emphasize that there should be an inextricably intertwined connection between the conceptions of truth and meaning. As to me, although both philosophers are similar for they share the idea that there is an essential relationship between the notions of truth and meaning, I don't think that their conceptions of both meaning and truth are one and the same thing as I already stated in the foregoing discussion.

As its general objective, this thesis primarily aimed at exposing Wiredu's epistemology, and attempting to depict his critical suggestions on some "epistemological" matters such as St. Anselm's, Descartes's, St. Thomas Aquinas's arguments for knowing whether God does exist as well as Berkeley's doctrine of '*to be is to be perceived.*' Consequently, I attempted to discuss or explicate Wiredu's conception or knowledge of the existence of an object or a thing. In this regard, this thesis made explicit that Wiredu's famous epistemological doctrine '*to be is to known,*' is equivalent to the idea that to assert the existence of an object and to claim knowledge of it is one and the same thing. As I already argued, in other words, for Wiredu, to assert the existence of an object is to claim some sort of knowledge of the object. Thus, when we talk of the existence of an object or a thing, we are, in fact, considering a certain relation of a term or a concept to an object. Hence, this paper tried to demonstrate that for Wiredu, just as for Kant, existence is not an attribute or a predicate. Therefore, existence is not an attribute of an object and cannot be logically bound up with the conception of any entity whatever as far as Wiredu is concerned.

Unlike Wiredu, just as I already argued in chapter two, St. Anselm and Descartes tried to assert the existence of God on the basis of the ontological arguments in which knowledge of the correct conception or attribute of God is assumed. Whereas St. Thomas Aquinas attempted to offer five

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., p.123.

ways or proofs namely, the argument from motion, the argument from efficient causality, the argument from possibility and necessity, the argument from the gradation to be found in things and that of the governance of the world for knowing God's existence. So, according to all these proofs of Thomas Aquinas, it is by considering God's sensible effects that we conceive the existence of the first cause, i.e., God. However, in this research, I critically responded to all the three philosophers' conceptions of God's existence by employing the implications of Wiredu's epistemology. In general, I would like to argue in this thesis that St. Anselm's ontological argument for proving God's existence, which proceeds from knowledge of the meaning of the word 'God' to knowledge or conception of the existence of God, Descartes's argument, which also correlates knowledge of God's existence with knowledge of God's essential attributes as well as St. Thomas Aquinas's both cosmological and teleological arguments, which associate knowledge of the existence of God with knowledge of God's sensible effects are commonly held to be true in the history of philosophy.

However, in this paper I argued that I found another version of arguments, which accounts for knowing God's existence on the basis of the implications of Wiredu's idea of knowledge of existence. So, it is argued that, for Wiredu, to assert God exists is to assert that the term 'God' has a reference, i.e., refers to an object. For him, as I already stated, one could not even begin to investigate the claim unless one could obtain an

adequate conception of the significance of the term 'God' independently of the question of whether it, in fact, has a reference. Besides, in relation to language, Wiredu also maintains that it is quite reasonable to say that an expression or a meaning or a word which refers to possible state of affairs or situation or object is meaningful. On the contrary, an expression is meaningless if it refers to no possible object, etc; and by implication God is a possible being as far as Wiredu is concerned. Thus, Wiredu pointed out that existence is not an attribute of objects and by implication, whatever the right conception or attribute of God may be, the issue of his existence is logically separate from it. Therefore, I argued in this thesis that this account of Wiredu's epistemology brings forth another version of arguments for claiming to know God's existence, which is critical of the arguments held by St. Anselm, Descartes and St. Thomas Aquinas for knowing God's existence.

The thesis also depicted Wiredu's critical suggestions on Berkeley's philosophical doctrine of '*to be is to be perceived.*' When this doctrine of Berkeley is treated in the light of Wiredu's epistemological thesis 'to be is to be known, the treatment reveals or proves that Berkeley would seem to conflate the ontological and the epistemological theses. The point here is that Berkeley speaks about sensory objects of knowledge as ideas. Wiredu, however, talks of the difficulty or trouble which faces any theory that resolves material objects into forms of perception or apprehension. He asks how such a theory can accommodate the fact that at any given time there are countless objects not perceived by its propounder or perceiver.

On this point Wiredu presents that Berkeley tries to answer: "*If I am not actually perceiving an object then either it is a possible object of my perception i.e., a possible sensation of mine, or it is actually being perceived by another perceiver... what is not actually perceived by me is actually perceived by another spirit which is a constant perceiver of everything- God.*"<sup>159</sup>

However, according to Wiredu, it is the existence of an object that consists in being known rather than the object itself. As I argued, unlike Wiredu, Berkeley states that sensible or material objects are sensations, which, as Wiredu considers it, is the ontological thesis. Wiredu, of course, agrees with Berkeley that for sensible objects [Wiredu adds 'anything whatever'] to be is to be known or apprehended. Nonetheless, Wiredu is critical of Berkeley's failure of separating the epistemological thesis that for sensible objects to be is to be perceived from the ontological doctrine that sensible objects of human knowledge are nothing but ideas or sensations.

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., p.135.

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## **Declaration**

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work, and has not been presented for a degree in any other university. The sources or materials used in this thesis are duly acknowledged.

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Date of Submission 19/07/2011