

Making a Case for Yoruba Inverted Supervenience on the Nature of the Mind

Richard Taye Oyelakin (PhD)
Department of Philosophy
Obafemi Awolowo University
Ile-Ife
Nigeria

and

Babalola Joseph Balogun (PhD)
Department of Philosophy
Obafemi Awolowo University
Ile-Ife
Nigeria

Abstract

The problem of the nature of mind centres on the question whether what is called mind has independent existence or it is nothing over and above bodily events and processes. Whereas Descartes opts for the former by providing the first systematic outline for dualism, wherein mind and body are affirmed to possess distinct ontological statuses, the physicalists, especially of the contemporary order, have continued, vigorously, to affirm the latter with the aim of providing a naturalistic basis for resolving the problem of the nature of mind. The growth of physicalism in contemporary philosophy could be traced to the historical evidence of the diverse irresolvable problems engendered by dualism. However, physicalism has not fared better, as it too has incurred quite a number of issues militating against its plausibility as an explanatory thesis. The many identified inadequacies of the physicalist account of mind necessitates that attempts to address the question should be sought elsewhere. This paper explores Yoruba metaphysical view on the nature of the mind as an alternative account. The paper finds out that the Yoruba metaphysical perspective on the subject matter resembles one of the physicalist theories called supervenience, although in its metaphysical structure, it inverts the order of the orthodox supervenience. Coined “inverted supervenience”, the thesis holds that the physical world supervenes on the spiritual world for its existence. It, thus, becomes futile to seek rational justification for the spiritual world, as doing so appears tantamount to seeking a mental justification for the physical events in the orthodox supervenience hypothesis.

Formulating the Problem

Contrary to Descartes' argument for dualism, there are physicalists positions united by the central claim that the ultimate principle of the universe is matter. Matter, they argue, is describable by the laws of physics. Hence, given that all things are, or reducible to, matter, then every natural thing is describable in its material form. Every material form is a physical component of the world. Therefore, the mental is a natural phenomenon, and it is describable in its material form as a physical component of the world. Consequently, physicalists maintain the position that the mental domain is part of the physical constituent of the universe. Physicalism, in its simplest formulation, is "the thesis that everything is physical" (Stoljar 2021); that is, the doctrine that all phenomena can be described in its atomic terms and in terms of the principles of space and time.

For the physicalists, therefore, mental properties can be accounted for and be reconciled with the apparent properties of a purely physical world (Robert 2003, 49). This may be taken to mean that everything which exists cannot be extended beyond its physical properties; that is, there are no kinds of things other than physical things. The physicalists hold the view that the ultimate nature of the universe is material. Thus, by implication, "human beings are fully material entities whose workings and properties may be completely explicated by the concepts and theories drawn from an ideally complete physics" (Maslin 2001, 73).

This sharply contrasts with the dualists' contention that beside the physical properties, there are some non-physical properties in the world. In particular, the dualists often cite human mental domain as an instance of non-physical properties. Given the dualist claim that the mental is essentially constituted by non-physical properties, and the physicalist counter-claim that if only body really exists, then the mental is an extension of the body; the following questions become imperative: "What is the nature of the mental?"; "Is it part of the physical?"; "If it is physical, how so?" These are fundamental questions which the physicalists are confronted with, and to which they have attempted answers.

The physicalists approach to the question is in two dimensions. The first is epistemological and the second is metaphysical. Prominent among the epistemological approach is Joseph Levine's argument on the issues of the appropriateness of the concept, terms, and propositions used to describe or talk about the mental (Levine 2002). The second approach is the metaphysical; it is concerned with the questions on the ontology of mental state. The need to answer the ontological questions such as "what is that thing called the mental state?" "Does it exist?" "What is its nature?" "What makes up mental states?" "What does it consist in?" "What are its properties?" has been the focus of the physicalists using several theories. Principal among these physicalists theories are behaviourism, identity theories, supervenience, and functionalism. None of these theories has addressed these questions adequately. This is because each attempt is either too exclusive, or implausible in its fundamental proposition.

An attempt is made in this paper to understand the Yoruba metaphysical view point and position on these questions. It is found out that Yoruba metaphysical position does not align strictly with any of these popular physicalist's theories. The fundament of Yoruba metaphysical belief is established on mitigated idealism. This position may find expression in what may be called spiritual supervenience. This is a belief that the physical properties and account of whatever is called the mind, relies upon the strength and spiritual nature and foundation of the person. That is, the explanation of the physical nature of the mind is meaningful

to the extent that it conforms and harmonises with the spiritual explanation of the human nature, otherwise it will be inconsistent with their belief and will be rejected (Searle 2004; Chalmers 1996).

Physicalists' Attempts towards Solving the Problem

The main question is how to account for the nature of the mental states as a physical component of the empirical world. The central claim of physicalism is that only physical things and properties exist (Fasiku 2013). Further, since the human being is a part of the universe, its nature, including the mental aspect, is understood in physicalist terms and subjected to the natural laws (Chalmers 1996, xiii). The main concern for the physicalists is that the nature of the mental states should be described as part of the constituents of the universe. We shall here identify three physicalist theories (i.e. behaviourism, mind-brain identity theory and the theory of supervenience) to demonstrate their theoretical inadequacies.

Behaviourism

Behaviorism¹ seeks to do an ontological reduction of the mental to behavioural ontology. Reductionism obtains when the existence of phenomenon A is understood to be nothing over and above the existence of phenomenon B. In this case, Phenomenon A is said to be reducible to phenomenon B (Chalmers 1996, 42). For instance, the phenomenon “water” is understood to be nothing over and above the phenomenon “H₂O”. The same occurs of the possibility of a reduction between the phenomena “NaCl” and the phenomenon “Salt”, “temperature” and “mean molecular energy”, “Unmarried adult male” and “Bachelor”, “spinster” and “unmarried adult female”, etc. For behaviourism, the only objective and natural property which may adequately account for the nature of human being is behavior. Disagreements about the nature of behavior may be significantly addressed and resolved. This is the reason behaviour is an object of scientific experimentation.

For the behaviorists, in understanding everything about a person, all that needs to be studied is the behavior. For them, mental phenomena should be avoided in understanding the nature of a human being, simply because they are not and could not be subjected to empirical verification. For instance, anger is a mental state. For X (a person) to be angry, the behaviourists will ask, does X usually squeeze his face, unusually keeps quiet, and so on? Squeezing ones face, unusually keeping quiet, among others, are behavioural evidence which show that a person is angry. The same way, laughter, cheerfulness, and so on, are behavioural evidence which show that a person is happy. The mental state of happiness is also reducible to behavioural state of laughter, cheerfulness, excitement, and so on.² For the behaviourists, the mental phenomenon “anger” is nothing over and above the

¹ Behaviorism was a twentieth century movement in Europe and America which followed the footpath of science and sought to base its study and understanding of the mind only on the observable behavior which can be scientifically experimented and justified.

² The phrase “et cetera” suggests that the list may be endless. However, it is a negative indication for the behaviourist explanation. The point is that there may be an endless list of those behavioural qualities. This is an indication to the point that application of behavioural qualities will end up being circular.

behavioural phenomenon “squeezing one’s face, unusually keeping quiet, or red eye-balls”, neither is the mental phenomenon “happiness” something over and above the behavioural determinants. Variants of behaviourism are methodological behaviorism and logical behaviourism.

The strength of behaviourism consists in the fact that no theory about the nature of the mental states can be concluded without the consideration of behavioural output. In spite of this advantage, behaviorism became weakened towards the middle of the twentieth century. It especially came under an attack of the linguist Noam Chomsky (1971). For Chomsky, saying that when we study psychology, we are studying behaviour is as unintelligent as saying that when we study physics, we are studying meter readings. Of course, behavior is used as evidence in psychology, just as meter reading is used as evidence in physics, but it is a mistake to confuse the evidence that we have about a subject matter for the subject matter itself. The subject matter of psychology is the human mind, and human behaviour is evidence for the existence and features of the mind, but is not itself the mind (Searle 2004).

Besides, Chisholm (1957) have pointed out that behaviorism provides an implausible account of the meanings of our mental state terms, since, intuitively, it may be possible for a subject to have the mental states in question without the relevant behavioral dispositions — and vice versa. For example, Jingo may believe that it's going to rain even if he may not be disposed to wear a raincoat or take an umbrella when leaving the house or to perform any other rain-avoiding behaviors, if Jingo doesn't mind, or actively enjoys, getting wet. In other words, the statements which will explain Jingo’s behavior in this circumstance will fail to link Jingo’s behavior to a rain expectation behavior. This argument concludes that there are some properties in the nature of humans that mere behavioristic understanding of empirical evidences will not be able to account for. In fact, as it shall be pointed out later, Yoruba believes that the real person is inside. For the Yoruba people, a relationship of asynchronous is possible between the outward appearance or manifestation and the inner thought system. The Yoruba people will say: *Inu ni eniyan wa*, (The real person is inside). To say this is to imply that a person consists of something more than the mere association of behavioral preponderances. Following from this view, the Yoruba belief is not in full tandem with behaviourism. Nonetheless, in Yoruba culture, outward behavior, character and attitudinal manifestations are believed to determine who the real person is. If a person is societally judged to be a morally depraved person, he carries the label even if he changes overtime. For instance, *Eni ba J’ale leekan, to tu wa da Aso Aran b’ori, Aso Ole l’o da b’ora*, (if a person has been caught of stealing once, whatever wealth he displays is a proceed of stealing). No one is willing to associate with such a person, even if he/she tries to prove that he/she is a changed person. The point already established is that the Yoruba belief does not agree totally with the view which determines who a person is by only behavioural processes and dispositions.

Mind- Brain Identity Theory

Mind-brain identity theory gained relevance as a result of the weaknesses of behaviourism. It seeks to address some of the difficulties encountered by behaviourism, to provide a physicalistic account of the nature of the mental states. Hence, mind-brain identity theory attempts to provide an

adequate account of the nature of the mental state that avoids the identified flaws of behaviourism. This theory came to prominence in the early 1950s and 60s and was advocated by philosophers such as U.T. Place, J.J.C. Smart, Herbert Feigl, D.M. Armstrong, etc. (Place 1956, 44-50; Smart 1962, 160-172; Feigl 1967, etc.). Although, there are slight variations in the position of these scholars, they hold a common view that there is no immaterial substance called mind existing independent of matter. The mind-brain identity theory is also a reductionist thesis, in that it seeks to explain the properties of mental states in terms of material properties. With the conception of mental states as states of a natural being, the mind-brain identity theorist argues that mental states must be capable of a natural description and materialist reduction. Consequently, this theory essentially holds that what is called the mental state is identical with and not 'above' or 'over' some states in the brain. In other words, it claims that properties of mental states are synonymous with properties of the brain states (Smart 1962, 160-172).

The implication of the identity theory is that one can give a comprehensive account of humans without recourse to any form of souls – spirit, spirituality or 'ghost stuff'. That is, as Smart (1959) claims,

... for a full description of what is going on in a man you would have to mention not only the physical processes in his tissues, glands, nervous system, and so forth, but also his state of consciousness (which are his brain processes): his visual, auditory, and tactual sensations, his aches and pains.³

Smart argues that in so far as a sensation statement is a report of something, that something is in fact a brain process. Sensations are nothing over and above brain processes (Smart 1962). This is the reductionist argument to the conclusion that mental states are identical to brain states. Consciousness, for Smart, is a class name. Mental states are sub-classes. In other words, Smart argues that an understanding of the nature of humans which fails to identify the mental states as material components occupying the same level with the bodily glands and tissues, is not adequate. The entire nature of human beings must be rendered in materialist terms.

Identity theory is divided into two prominent types, namely the type-type and the token-token identity theory. The type-type identity theory simply holds that types of mental states are identical to types of brain states. For instance, every time I think "that is a table", there is a mental state X which is identical to brain state Y, and that state is always the same, every time I have that thought. For every type of a mental state, there is a corresponding type of Central Nervous System (CNS) state. Pain is a type of mental state. Type-type theory says that there is a particular brain state equivalent to pain state. However, for the token-token theory, this appears too presumptuous for

³ Here, Smart J. J. C, stated the thesis of identity theory. For him, it is not the thesis that, for example, 'after image' or 'ache' means the same as 'brain process of sort X' (where 'X' is replaced by a description of a certain sort of brain process). It is that in so far as 'after-image' or 'ache' is a report of a process, it is a report of a process that happens to be a brain process. For further information, see J.J.C. Smart's influential work; "Sensations and brain Processes", *Philosophical Review*, LXVII, 1959, p.142.

simplicity. The basic assumption for the token-token theory is that individual mental state is identical to individual brain state. Unlike the type-type, the token-token variant argues that each instance of mental state is equivalent to each instance of brain state. This theory identifies the peculiarity of each token of mental experience. It argues that the best approach to account for the nature of mental state is to provide an account for each token of mental experience. For instance, the token-token theory contends that there are different tokens of pain. The pain caused by headache is different from that caused by a stomachache, and that caused by a disappointment is different from that caused by hunger. Token-token theory seeks to understand the brain state corresponding to each instance or token of pain state. It does not seek to understand pain as a type.

However, some objections have been raised against mind-brain identity theory. For instance, Jerry Fodor (1971) has argued that a significant statement cannot follow from the identity of the mental term with physiological term. It is argued that “no statement of the form ‘x is y’ could be significant where ‘x’ is a mental term, ‘y’ is a physiological term, ‘is’ means identity, and all terms bear their current senses” (Fodor 1971, 135). Claims such as this, Fodor argues, violate the Leibniz law of the indiscernibility of the identicals.⁴ But, in the case of the relationship between the properties of mental state and the properties of brain state, it can be shown that brain states possess some properties. For example, they possess the property of being locatable in space and time, and the possibility of being measured, either actually or in principle. However, these properties cannot be attributed to mental states. This (property) asymmetry between brain states and mental states arguably defeats the acclaimed identity relation between them. Therefore, such an identity becomes false (Malcolm 1964, 155-125; Shaffer 1965, 96-98). Besides, the possibility of a one-to-one correspondence between the mental properties and brain properties has been questioned by Abelson (1970).

The Theory of Supervenience

The theory of supervenience states that mental events owe their entire existence and features to physical events. It states that mental events do not have separate and independent powers of their own. Besides, any alteration in the physical event has a corresponding alteration on the mental event (Maslin 2001; Chalmers 1996). This implies that there can be no mental difference without physical difference. Supervenience, whose prominent proponent is Donald Davidson (1980), seeks to avoid the pitfalls encountered by the identity theory by holding that, although it may be impossible to identify mental properties with physical properties in a one-to-one fashion, mental properties may still be anchored to, or be grounded in, physical properties. The major difference between identity theory and supervenience is that whereas the former is a reductionist theory, the latter is not. For Davidson (1980, 214);

⁴ The law of the indiscernibility of the identicals states that what is called ‘a’ and what is called ‘b’ are identical just in case ‘a’ and ‘b’ possesses equivalent properties.

Although the position I describe denies there are psychophysical laws, it is consistent with the view that mental characteristics are in some sense dependent, or supervenient, on physical characteristics. Such supervenience might be taken to mean that there cannot be two events exactly alike in all physical respects but differing in some mental respects, or that an object cannot alter in some mental respects without altering in some physical respects.

This is saying that no two things that are physically alike can be mentally (or psychologically) different, and a being's mental properties will be determined by its physical ones. The existence of mental states depends on the existence of physical states. Mental states, in this sense, do not have an independent existence. They are caused and their nature is determined by the nature of their supervening physical states. Davidson's thesis that mental states supervene on their physical states is antecedent to his famous thesis of anomalous monism (Maslin 2001). Anomalous monism is the position that though mental states are not subject to natural laws, their supervening physical states are. If there cannot be a difference in mental states without a difference in physical states, then there can only be one substance which is the physical states (Salami 1992).

A central objection to the supervenience theory is that it makes a physical property a necessary requirement for having mental property. The theory of supervenience holds that for an organism to be capable of having mental states, that organism must be such that it has some physical base properties. This implies that only organism with physical properties is qualified to have mental properties. Hence, some functionalist philosophers, such as Ned Block (1980), have accused supervenience of restricting the scope of organisms which are capable of having mental states. For supervenience, an organism cannot possess mental states if the organism does not have physical properties. In its direct terms, supervenience holds that only physical organisms can have mental states.

There are strong indications that Yoruba belief about the nature of the mind appears to resemble the position of supervenience. As we intend to show in a subsequent section of the paper, the Yoruba version of supervenience could be appropriately termed 'inverted supervenience'. This is a variant of supervenience which inverts the base properties which determine the nature of the mind. For the version attributed to Yoruba belief, the spiritual properties are identified as the base properties upon which the physical properties supervene. A pertinent question is whether functionalism agrees with this variant of supervenience. This is what will be highlighted in the shift towards functionalism.

The Shift towards Functionalism

Functionalism holds that the nature of the mental is not describable by behavioural dispositions, neither is it equivalent to brain state nor does it exist or hang on the physical phenomenon. For functionalism, the nature of the mental is identified by the role it plays in a functional system where it is a part. A mental state is therefore equivalent to functional state. A

mental state is determined by its causal relations to sensory stimulation, other mental states, and behavioural output.

A functionalist attempt at advancing the physicalists' project to account for the nature of the mental state as physical component of the world, is what is known as "the Putnam's computational hypothesis" of the mind. The hypothesis suggests that the mental states are the functional states of a computational system (Putnam 1975). Mental states are identified by the function they performed in a system of which they are part (Putnam 1975). Nevertheless, Putnam (1988) argues that the machine hypothesis may not be an adequate account for the nature of mental state, because the hypothesis erroneously presupposes that meanings are in the head. But for Putnam, environmental evidence plays important roles in meaning fixation. For an identity determination of a particular functional content, there is multiples of correlating environmental evidence.

Therefore, there is the need for an equivalent relation between the functional content and these environmental evidences. Putnam argues that there is no means of discovering this relation. He notes that even if it is possible to account for this equivalent relation, then such account faces the problem of justification raised by the Godel's incompleteness theorem. However, it has been argued by the biological naturalists such as John Searle and Ned Block that this Putnam hypothesis fails because it presupposes that mental properties are computational properties. But for them, not all mental properties are computational properties. That is, there are some natural properties which are non-computational such as pain state (Searle 2004; Block 2002). These non-computational properties, which are realized by the brain processes, are physical part of the component of the world (Searle 2004).

An understanding of some basic Yoruba beliefs will certify that, in matters of the nature of the mind, they are neither in agreement with computational nor biological naturalism. The foundation of the Yoruba belief in the nature of the mind is to be gleaned from their belief in what a human person is made up. This shall be the focus of the next section.

The Nature of Mind in Yoruba Metaphysics of Person

In this section, we focus on the basic component of a person as elicited in Yoruba philosophy. A good grasp of the nature of the mind in Yoruba metaphysics reveals a tilt towards the dominance of the spirit over the physical. It should be emphasized that within the Yoruba metaphysical discourse, the urge to equate the mind with the brain never arises in any form. This is because, Yoruba metaphysics conceives a person to consist of three main elements, namely *Ara*, (body) *Emi*,(soul) and *Ori* (inner head, the bearer of human destiny). This tripartite⁵ nature of the human being is at variance with the western dualist nature of the human being (Makinde 2010). In

⁵ However, it is must be noted that where other popular scholars such as; Wande Abimbola and Akin Makinde identified three elements making up the nature of a person in Yoruba belief, Segun Gbadegesin identified four elements which are; *Ara*, *Okan*, *Emi* and *Ori* . For him, "Among the terms that feaure in discussions of the Yoruba concept of eniyan, the following are prominent: ara, okan, emi, ori,". Gbadegesin, E. S. "*Eniyan: The Yoruba Concept of a Person.*" In Coetzee, P. H. and Roux, A. P. J. (Eds) *The African Philosophy Reader*. (London: Routlege, 1988), 149-168

the former, there is no *ara-inu* (inner body). A body is construed in its pure physical form consisting of material properties. But there is what may be termed *Okan-inu*, which might have its synonym as ‘mind’ in English. This is a counterpart to the physical *okan* (heart) (Gbadegesin 2003, 212).⁶ The physical *okan* is responsible for blood pumping, circulation and other regulatory services in the body. There is also the *Ori-inu* (inner head), a counterpart to the physical head. This is believed to be the carrier or bearer of human destiny.⁷

Now, the mind (*Okan-inu*) is not thought to be synonymous to the brain as it is argued by the mind-brain identity theory and neither is it thought to be determined by any overt behaviour of a particular individual. This is because, according to Gbadegesin, it is mainly thought of as a metaphysical seat of conscious identity. In fact, Gbadegesin construes *Okan-inu* as having clearly delineated and defined functions outside of and apart from the human brain. This is because, for him, *okan* is the basis for conditions such as *igboya* (bravery), *eru* (fear), *ife* (love), *ikorira* (hate), *ayo* (joy), *ibanuje* (sadness), and *ojora* (cowardice) (Gbadegesin 2003). Makinde, however, notes that as it is in the western debates, the issue of the mind and its relationship with the body is also complicated in Yoruba conception of a person (Makinde 2010). For Wande Abimbola, Makinde and Gbadegesin, *ori* (inner head) is responsible for human destiny. In fact, for them, both *emi* (soul) and *ori* (inner head) are metaphysical in nature and function. Each of them is an entity obtained from *Orun*, which is a counterpart of the Judeo-Christian heaven.

Given that Gbadegesin explains *Okan-inu* (inner heart/mind) to have its function in the immaterial domain, it may be safe to classify its function in the same realm with the soul (*emi*) and inner head (*ori*). It is not, therefore, difficult to see that these three elements of a person have something in common: they all have their origin not in the physical realm. In other words, as apparent in Yoruba metaphysics of person, none of the three is believed to hang on *ara* (body) and the material properties to perform its functions. It is believed that each of these only manifests its existence and function through the body. From this understanding, it is consistent to argue, using the language of computationalism, that *emi* (soul), *okan-inu* (inner heart/mind) and *ori-inu* (inner head), are metaphysically abstract in nature and are being implemented by the body; being an appropriate physical substrate for their implementation. This submission appears apt since each of these mental conditions are invisible but manifest themselves through the body. This is underlined by Makinde’s (2010, 107) assertion that,

⁶ Whereas, Gbadegesin identifies what he terms *Okan-inu* (inner heart or mind) as a counterpart to physical or biological heart, Abimbola, *Opt cit*, 1971, p.78, established the physical heart as a counterpart to *emi* (soul). This actually does not portend disruption or confusion in the understanding of the basic thesis in the Yoruba belief about the metaphysical nature of the mind

⁷ See more discussion on this in Abimbola, W. “On the Yoruba Concept of Human Personality”. In *La Notion De Personnel en Afrique Noire*. (Paris: Central Natural de la Rescherche Scientifique, 1971), 41-62. See also Gbadegesin, E. S., “Destiny, Personality and the Ultimate Reality of Human Existence: A Yoruba Perspective.” *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Philosophy of Understanding: Ultimate Reality and Meaning*. Vol. 7, No.3, (1984): 173-188, See also Makinde, M. A. *African Philosophy: The Demise of a Controversy*. (Ile-Ife, Obafemi Awolowo University Press, 2010), pp. 103-118

It therefore appears that the body cannot affect the soul in any way although the soul can affect the body by keeping it alive until the time of its destruction or mutilation which comes into being in different ways, none of which can affect the soul.

Makinde's point is that the sort of relationship which exists between the body and the soul is not that of causal interaction. He further notes that the soul is an imperishable element of a person because it does not consist of the natural properties, rather it is a property of *Olodumare*; thus, it goes back to him after the death of the body. In Bewaji's view of the Yoruba cultural perspective, *Olodumare* is regarded as, "The Supreme Being," who "by nature, is beyond the linguistic, conceptual, scientific or metaphysical tools with which human being comprehend ideas, realities, beings and things" (Bewaji 2007: 358). The term 'dead souls' does not make any sense to an average Yoruba person. In fact, the idea of a dead soul is a contradiction in terms for Makinde (Makinde 2010). This is because if the soul is immortal, like its creator, then it is inconsistent to conceive of the possibility of its death.

Ori, the bearer of human destiny is also believed to have its source from *orun* (counterpart of heaven). For Makinde, all that a person becomes or achieves in *aye* (earth) depends on the choice of spiritual head he brings from heaven. Against Plato's automatic and exclusive attribution of reason to humans, in the Yoruba metaphysics, the choice of *ori* brought from *orun* determines whether the individual ends up being rational or irrational, intelligent or unintelligent, in *aye*. Makinde (2010, 110) writes:

This is so because human beings do not always behave as if they are wholly or always rational, wise or intelligent. The Yoruba conception of *ori* or inner head seems to suggest the reason why this is so. It depends on the choice of *ori* an individual brings from heaven. This is why we have supposedly rational beings who are irrational or unintelligent and unable to live a successful life. The Yoruba would ascribe this kind of situation to one's choice of *ori* which is said to represent human destiny.

The Yoruba people's philosophical reflections hold the belief that being intelligent, rational or irrational, is determined, not by the constitution or function of the brain or the kind of skill one has acquired, or even the degree of one's academic or intellectual training, but by the choice of *ori* an individual brought from *Orun*. This point is particularly important because it is a marker of originality of the Yoruba thought system concerning the mental-spiritual nature of a person. One implication of this point is that whereas some of the necessary qualities of a person such as rationality, intelligence, wisdom, and knowledge, are thought by western thinkers to have their source in the human brain; the Yoruba source for these human attributes is in the spiritual realm, using the choice of *ori* which an individual brings from *Orun*.

If it is acceptable that human necessary qualities have spiritual source and depend on the choice of *ori* an individual brings from *Orun*, then it is arguable that even all the human qualities itemised by Gbadegesin also depend on the choice of *ori* an individual brings from *Orun*. This is

because intelligence and rationality, bravery and cowardice, love and hate, all are properties of the same realm. Therefore, they all belong to and are sourced from the spiritual realm. This is a consistent reasoning concerning the thought of the Yoruba concerning the nature of the soul and the mind.

Inverted Supervenience as Yoruba Position on the Nature of the Mind

The point so far established is that certain properties which define human nature such as rationality, bravery, love and intelligence, are thought to belong to the spiritual realm, within the Yoruba metaphysical framework. This is so, because, whether a person is wise, intelligence, brave or otherwise, depends on the choice of *ori* he brings from *Orun*. Thus, the focus of this section is to argue that Yoruba metaphysics supports a variant of supervenience. This variant we will here refer to as 'Inverted Supervenience'. Orthodoxly construed and within the context of philosophy of mind, the theory of supervenience states that mental events depend on the physical events for their entire existence and realisation. Hence, mental events do not have separate and independent powers of their own. Besides, any alteration in the physical event has a corresponding alteration on the mental event (Maslin 2001; Chalmers 1996). In other words, that there can be no mental difference without physical difference.

However, the Yoruba metaphysics of person outlined in this paper clearly sits the orthodox supervenience on its head. For the Yoruba, the main events which exist are spiritual events. The following inferences may be drawn from the Yoruba conception of person outlined in the last section.

(1) Physical body and events depend on the spiritual events for their existence. This is partly because, the body cannot survive without the presence of *emi*, whereas *emi* does not suffer annihilation at the death of the body. In fact, the departure of *emi* from the body signifies the death of the body.

(2) All mental properties assume spiritual nature. This may be understood in two senses. First, the elements that constitute mental properties for the Yoruba metaphysics are spiritual in nature. This is because they are abstract and are thought to survive the person who manifests them. For instance, there may be some culture where it is believed that wisdom or intelligence dies with a person. This may not be defensible in light of our enunciation here. What is sensible and defensible within the Yoruba metaphysical framework is that no one has the preserve of wisdom, intelligence or rationality. This is supported by the fact that it is the person who manifests wisdom or intelligence that may die. Intelligence or wisdom does not die with the person, otherwise there would not have remained wise or intelligent people on earth.

Death of the body actually occurs when the soul leaves the body. When a person dies, he alone stops manifesting intelligence, leaving other to manifest it. So, while it may make sense that an intelligent person dies, it sounds inconsistent to conceive of the death of intelligence or wisdom, the same way it is the case for *emi*. They are all believed to be properties of *Olodumare* (Bewaji 1998: 11), and therefore carries his eternal nature. Second, these elements are thought to depend on and are determined by the choice of *ori* an individual brings from *Orun*. This is the nucleus of inverted supervenience to which the Yoruba metaphysics of person pointedly leads. In other words, whether a person will manifest these spiritual elements on earth supervenes on and is determined by the choice and type of *ori* that an individual makes. Making the point more forcefully, it may mean that the physical events represented by the manifestation of rationality, bravery, intelligence, love, and others, supervene upon the spiritual events of the choice of *ori*.

(3) On a broader metaphysical level, the entire physical world and all its properties supervene on the spiritual domain. There are indications that within the Yoruba metaphysics, the physical world co-extends to *Orun* (heaven). This finds expression in the Yoruba cultural belief that there is a continuum of existence between heaven and earth. One way in which this belief manifests among the Yoruba is their view about death. This view has it that when someone dies as a result of exhaustion of his or her destiny on earth, he or she only sheds the earthly body in order to join the league of ancestors in *Orun* where he or she continues to live. Thus, rather than being two opposing realms of existence, the earth and heaven form a continuum, in which the latter dictates events in the former. Besides, those in *Orun* take interest in the *omo araye* (the earthlings) and they find occasion to visit or render some necessary and possible assistance at the point of call. Shrines and altars are media set up by the earthlings to commune with the *ara-Orun*. All these are necessary to show that in the Yoruba worldview, the *ara-Orun* do not worship nor need any necessary assistance and help of the *ara-Aye*, but the *ara-Aye* not only worship the *ara-Orun*, they depend on them for assistance and guidance. This is essential in order to put the inverted supervenience avowed by the Yoruba into a broader and clearer perspective.

One vital point has resonated throughout this section, namely that Yoruba metaphysical system reflects an inversion of the classical supervenience theory. The thesis of inverted supervenience just hewn out of Yoruba metaphysics of person is as strong as one takes the relationship between the two realms (spiritual and physical) of existence to be. For the hard-determinists or fatalists, such as Oduwole (1996), every single motion in the physical realm depends on activities in the spiritual realm. This may be too strong to defend because it would mean that even what science calls reflex actions such as sneezing, coughing, yawning, etc. would have to be explained in terms of their dependence on the spiritual. This may be taking the dependence too far. There is another, defensible sense in which inverted supervenience is strong, however. This is to argue that not only do physical events depend and are determined by spiritual events, even mental events are spiritual in nature and also supervene on the spiritual events of the choice of spiritual head.

An Attempt to Justify Yoruba Inverted Supervenience

How may the spiritual foundation for existence be rationally justified without begging the question? This is a challenging question for at least two reasons. One, it inspires the problem of what justification amounts to in this case. Second, suppose justification in this case is stipulated to be so-and-so, would it be something achievable without further calls for justification? For example, within the Yoruba metaphysical framework already established in this paper, whether or not one is justified in holding the belief in the Yoruba inverted supervenience, appears to supervene on the choice of *ori* that one brings from heaven! This is the case particularly because the phrase “rational justification” presupposes presenting evidence that can be interpersonally accepted as reasonable. It, however, becomes problematic as soon as the issue of *ori* creeps in. To be sure, the concept *ori* still harbours loads of unsettled problems within the Yoruba metaphysics of person.

Regardless of the above reservation, a rational justification for the thesis of inverted supervenience could be sought for its pragmatic utility. Of course, while theoretical research into various phenomena in the world is seriously encouraged and, sometimes, sponsored, it is not to be assumed that every phenomenon in the world is capable of being penetrated by even the most perceptive of human minds. This may be due, first, to the complexity of the entity called the world, and second, to the limits of human rational capacity and ability to comprehend. If human beings have not been able to sufficiently understand and justifiably explain earthly all phenomena, how much less exciting is the attempt to justify explanation about spiritual occurrences. This is why some phenomena, events or occurrences are better put in the domain of belief, because rational investigation has not been able to capture the information needed to transform them to knowledge. Kant's realm of *noumena* still remains as intellectually foggy today, as it was in Kant's time.

Consider an instance of Yoruba inverted supervenience. A person is shot in a dream, and upon waking up, discovers he or she is unable to stand up. Suppose he or she is rushed to the hospital as an emergency case; the physicians may diagnose the person of some things based on their observation of whatever physical symptoms manifested. However, it is not to be assumed that the physician's diagnosis, when properly attended to, thus constitutes a proper cure of the strange illness. This is because the real cause of the problem has not been ascertained and treated. Nor would the medical community be willing to accept, even if aware of what actually occurred, both the real cause and the solution to the problem. But, would the inability of the medical community to detect, or agree, or find a solution to the problem, nullify the explanation of the cause of the problem? It does not quite seem so.

Although some events and occurrences may currently lack a means of being rationally justified, their manifestations cannot be nullified by the absence of such justification. Besides, Yoruba inverted supervenience becomes necessary in the search for a sufficient explanation for the nature of the mind not only because the physicalist attempts have failed to capture some salient features of the mind, but also because of their controversial denial of the possibility of the non-physical components of the universe. Only the physical or behavioural manifestations of the mind is physically present; its real nature, as intuition dictates, remains physically elusive. The minds, simply,

does not exist in the physical realm. We may conveniently push it to the domain of inexistence, but its troubling manifestations will keep proving our intellectual limitations.

Conclusion

The question of the nature of the mind, popularized by Descartes, constitutes the subject of discourse in this paper. The physicalists have since taken up the challenge to provide a sufficient account of the nature of the mind. However, as the paper has amply shown, using physicalist theories such as behaviourism, mind-brain identity theory, functionalism, etc. to explain the nature of mind has failed to provide an adequate account of the nature of the mind. The inadequacy of the physicalist theories suggests the need to explore other alternatives, especially those that may not align with the physicalist conceptual scheme. We believe that the Yoruba thesis of inverted supervenience proposed and defended in this paper provides such an alternative to physicalism.

The paper found out that on the nature of the mind, the Yoruba metaphysics of person actually inverts the basic tenet and hypothesis of supervenience. The paper therefore conceptualised 'inverted supervenience' as the metaphysical view which adequately captures the Yoruba view on the nature of the mind. Inverted supervenience is a metaphysical position that physical events and occurrences depend on and are determined by, the spiritual events and occurrences. In that case, spiritual events and processes are ascribed the main existence, whereas physical event and processes only supervene on them. The paper showed that this position is amply supported in the literature. The paper hanged the plausibility of the position on its pragmatic utility. It enables humans to realise their limitations towards some issues which appears natural. In other words, not all issues which manifests in the world are capable of a naturalist or physicalist explanation. Life is not all about physic-material verification. Of course, the real problem may consist in how to delineate these issues.

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