Philosophy of Argument

".....the journey of a philosopher"

By: Opatola Abdulmujeeb A.
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Introduction

*Philosophy of Argument*, as aimed by the philosopher, is simply to help understand the “wisdom behind an argument”. Argument is a common characteristic of humans. Due to their dialectical nature, humans philosophize around both important and irrelevant issues in their immediate environment for theoretical perfection. In spite of this, the philosopher pose the questions of what, for what, from what, why and how about an argument, whose argument is right or wrong?, or whose argument is valid or invalid?, what makes and why is an argument right or valid? and what makes and why is an argument wrong or invalid?.

Moreover, an argument between two intellectuals, for instance, could be peaceful (healthy) or violent (unhealthy). In other words, not all arguments are peaceful (healthy) and not all arguments are violent (unhealthy). So, this law – so to say – makes the philosopher to ask the question, what makes an argument to be peaceful? and what makes an argument to be violent? In addition, since an argument could be violent, resulting to being dangerous, then why should human, as a rational being argue? These are what the philosopher seeks to understand.

Therefore, all the aforementioned questions geared the philosopher towards the quest for the “wisdom behind an argument” to understand what an argument, in itself, is, what makes up an argument, how to argue, why argue at all, who is to (or can) argue, leading the philosopher to the philosophy surrounding arguments as expressed in this book.

The philosophy shall be taken subsequently in order and the philosopher hopes to carry the reader along in his quest for wisdom and understanding of argument to attain a theoretical perfection.
**Understanding the Philosophy in context**

The philosopher takes the universe itself and its volume i.e. all within it as a strange, unique and very complicated system governed by a relative and inherent – programmed – set of laws by nature which, in other words, is referred to as “wisdom”. This wisdom – so to say – is what makes the universe itself. Without the former, there is no latter. So, the idea is, understanding the wisdom is understanding the universe. Therefore, the quest for the understanding of the wisdom, in order to understand the universe, leads the philosopher to “philosophy”.

Defining philosophy comprehensively with appropriate words to meet absolute perfection is not plausible due to the fact that it seeks to understand a broad and very complicated system – the universe – therefore, a challenge for the philosophers. Etymologically philosophy is simply “love of wisdom”: from the Greek words, “philo” which means “love” and “sophia” which means “wisdom” and consequently, a philosopher is regarded as a “lover of wisdom”.

Furthermore, the philosopher extensively defines philosophy simply as an understanding of the answers to the questions *what, from what, for what, how and why*. With philosophy, the philosopher gets what he seeks to attain, a theoretical perfection i.e. the best possible state of understanding.

During the course of the quest for the understanding of the wisdom, the philosopher discovered that, to attain a theoretical perfection as a true or perfect philosopher, he needs to understand by nature, of what the wisdom is, in itself before he proceeds to understand all the answers to the question surrounding the wisdom. The latter is continuous with the former i.e. the understanding of the former is essential for the understanding of the latter and for any true or perfect philosopher, the understanding of the former, alone, is not enough. Therefore, a true philosopher who seeks to attain a theoretical perfection should not limit himself only to the former.

However, the understanding of the nature of the wisdom depends on theoretical sciences – so to say – and is regarded as the natural philosophy which gives the answers to the questions surrounding the wisdom and the
philosopher proceeds, using this, to understand the answers. In spite of all these, the philosopher moves on to the “philosophy of argument”.

In context, as intended by the philosopher, the philosophy of argument is a quest towards understanding the wisdom behind an argument by nature and in turn to understand the answers to questions surrounding the wisdom as provided by the understanding of its nature.

An argument is an effect – idealistic in nature – that proceeds from a cause which is, of course, human as a rational being. So, to understand by nature, the wisdom that makes an argument what it is, the philosopher begins from the cause to the effect in order to understand what nature of the cause gives birth to the nature of the effect, ultimately leading him to the wisdom behind the effect. It should be noted that, prior to this, he seeks to understand the nature of the cause itself before he could seek to understand what nature of the cause gives birth to the nature of the effect.

As a result of these, the philosopher seeks to understand human, the cause, then his nature to understand what nature of his gives birth to argument – the effect – in order to understand its nature and thereby propose the structural component that makes up an argument – the wisdom behind the effect.

This gives answers to the questions surrounding the wisdom, posed by the
philosopher – i.e. what, from what, for what, how and why – and he, as a true philosopher, goes further to seek to understand the answers to these questions, so as to attain theoretical perfection. Therefore, the philosopher takes the next step in his quest in order to understand: (1) what an argument is (2) from what it is (3) for what it is (4) how to argue (5) why do human have to argue. As a result, this leads him to the ontology, epistemology, ethics and logic behind an argument as discussed in subsequent chapters.
Understanding Human by Nature

Human, as an integral part of the universe is a unique and complicated system due to his intimate association with his environment which is very vital to his existence. In a quest to understand human, as a true philosopher, it is necessary to seek to understand by nature, the wisdom behind what makes a human what he is and of course, seek to understand the answers to the questions surrounding the wisdom. However, the philosopher is not interested on the latter – not in the scope of this book – but on the former as it will help him to understand what nature of human gives birth to argument since, human is the cause of the effect.

Understanding by nature, the wisdom behind what makes up human is simply natural philosophy which is determined by theoretical sciences – so to say. So, the philosopher employs the knowledge of theoretical sciences in his quest. Then, he understood that, a human is a – complicated – biological organism made up of systems of organs of tissues of cells of macromolecules of small molecules of atoms of several subatomic particles and energy which are dependently related and every level that makes up a human is vital to his existence.

Moreover, in biological organization of complexity, a human belongs to a group of animals called primates which are characterized with large brains to body weight compared to other terrestrial animals. The philosopher also understood the fact that human has the highest well-developed functional brain among all primates and therefore, regarded as a higher animal. In other words, human, being a higher animal, possesses the power of intellect – so to say – which gives him that characteristic feature of freedom, to think and make decisions at his own will. In spite of this, the philosopher regards human as an intellectualistic being or an intelligible.

The brain is a unique organ which serves as the central control unit by receiving, analyzing, processing, coordinating, storing and transmitting information locally i.e. within human himself or outside with his environment. It connects human with his environment with the aid of other
appendages leading to a complicated system which brings about consciousness.

Consciousness, as understood by the philosopher according to theoretical sciences – neuroscience, is a weird phenomenon difficult to understand and define but it forms the basis of a human experience i.e. what he saw or can see, what he smelt or can smell, what he tasted or can taste, what he heard or can hear or what he felt or can feel. All these experiences are received by the brain as stimuli, analyzes, processes and stores them, then coordinates and transmits a feedback in form of responses to the appropriate environment. In other words, the brain receives an experience out of consciousness, analyzes and processes it into a perception, stores the perception and coordinates the transmission of the response in form of behavior.

So, the philosopher discovered that a behavior is a function of human as a result of his perception i.e. a human behavior is an effect in which a human perception is its cause. With this, the philosopher finds his answer to the question, what nature of the cause – human – gives birth to argument – the effect. Since, perceptions, a natural feature of the cause, causes the effect of common features of human – behaviors, then the philosopher says: Human perceptions gives birth to arguments.

However, in his quest to understand the nature of the cause and what nature of the cause gives birth to argument, he understood that the human brain is plastic – neuroplasticity. That is, it can undergo some morphological changes in response to new stimuli – so to say – from the environment. The new stimuli overwrites the old stimuli, causing change in the experience leading to a change in perception and thereby cause a change in effect i.e. change in argument.
Thereafter, the philosopher moves on to understand the nature of the effect, that is, what makes up an argument itself from the understanding of human perception – the nature of the cause that gives the effect – which shall be discussed in the next chapter. More on how experiences are turned into perception will also be discussed in subsequent chapters.
**Structural Components of an Argument**

Human, as an intellectualistic being by nature, possesses the free wits to think in order to make decisions i.e. he undergoes a process of analyzing his options before he decides to act (thinking) and as established by the philosopher in the previous chapter that human is a function of his perceptions, therefore, human perceptions gives birth to an argument through the same process of analyzing his perceptions. This is the key to understand the nature of the effect from the nature of the cause which leads the philosopher to the wisdom behind an argument. Thus, the nature of the effect proposes the structural components of an argument.

The process of analyzing perceptions forms the backbone of an argument and it could involve as many stages as possible which may be dependent or independent of one another. Every stage gives an analysis of a perception which is, of course, based on experience(s). However, this process results into a final stage in which human draws his conclusion from his analyses. So, this helps the philosopher in his quest to understand the nature of argument – effect as it originates from human perceptions – the nature of the cause and he, therefore, moves on to propose the structural components of an argument based on what he understood.

The stages involved in the process gives the analyses of the perceptions which the philosopher refers to as the premises and this results to the final stage of conclusion to produce an argument. In other words, an argument is made up of premises and a conclusion in which the former determines the latter and he – the philosopher – proposes the latter and the former as the structural components of an argument. This goes on to affirm that, there is no argument with the absence of any of the components.
Having known the components of an argument, the philosopher finds it easy to give a proper definition of an argument. However, he defines an argument as “the process of analyzing perceptions in stages as the premises in order to assert a conclusion”. For instance:

“Bad roads have caused many accidents resulting into many deaths. The citizens are hungry as the economy is getting worse. Hospitals are not well equipped. This government is a killer.”

The arguer presents his argument by analyzing his perceptions from the danger of bad roads: Stage 1 – to the situation of the citizens. Stage 2 – to the state of hospitals – Stage 3 – which results into an assertion in the final stage that the government is a killer – Stage 4. That is, the stages 1, 2 and 3 serves as premises for stage 4 which is the conclusion. This argument would be incomplete if, either the premises or conclusion is absent. If one of the premises is absent – for instance, stage 1 is absent – then perhaps, the argument might still stand.

For adequate understanding of the structural components of an argument as desired by the philosopher, he seeks to understand more on the process of analyzing perceptions, itself, leading to argument and he realized that the process can be done through two methods. These methods of processing helps the philosopher to classify an argument.

An arguer can analyze his perceptions through a process, in order to assert a general conclusion at the final stage of an argument. By this, the philosopher means that he – the arguer – is trying to induce a point i.e. conclusion, based
on his analyses which of course, stand as the premises. This method of processing – of analyzing perceptions – gives rise to an *inductive argument*. Take for an example:

“Every time I’ve tried to hold that hen, it hasn’t tried to bite me. So, if I try to hold it any time, it won’t try to bite me”

The arguer induces a general conclusion that *the hen won’t bite him* based on his perception from past experiences i.e. since, the hen has never tried to bite him on several occasions, then it won’t try to, the next time and of course, in subsequent occasions.

However, an arguer can employ the other method of processing to analyze his perceptions so as to assert a *specific conclusion* at the final stage of an argument. In other words, the arguer tries to *deduce* a point – conclusion – from his analyses and this gives rise to a *deductive argument*. An example is when the arguer say:

“Diseases are abnormal physiological conditions. An addiction is as a result of brain disorder, therefore an addiction is a disease.”

In this case, the arguer deduces a *specific conclusion* that *an addiction is a kind of disease* based on his perceptions which stand as the premises of the argument.

In spite of these, the philosopher therefore classify argument into *inductive argument and deductive argument* based on his understanding of the structural components of an argument.
With these, the philosopher is able to understand the wisdom behind an argument from the structural components as proposed by its nature. Literally, the understanding of the wisdom gives the answers to the questions – what, from what, for what, why and how – posed by the philosopher. Afterwards, in his quest for theoretical perfection, he moves further to understand these answers in order to solve the philosophical problems behind an argument.
Argument and its ontology

Attaining theoretical perfection – the primary objective of a true philosopher – goes beyond theoretical sciences as stated earlier in this text, therefore the philosopher continues his quest to understand the wisdom behind an argument. The wisdom, as proposed from our understanding of human by nature, using theoretical sciences establishes that an argument, as an effect, stems from perceptions – the nature of the cause – which are formed from experiences. So, argument and its ontology, as aimed by the philosopher is a quest to provide answers to the questions surrounding the existence of an argument – so to speak. By this, he means, to understand what can catalyze the existence of an argument and how the “what” catalyzes it. Using analogy, suppose two intelligible beings meet and converse, an argument might or not occur between them. So, the philosopher pose the question, what is the possibility that an argument will or not occur between them? And if it will, how will the argument come into being? All these are what the philosopher seeks to understand.

First, it is very important to understand how experiences build up to perceptions as this will give the philosopher the lead on his quest. Experiences simply results from the consciousness of something – so to speak – involving the major five senses of human i.e. sight, smell, taste, sound and touch. The philosophy of consciousness – phenomenology – is quite obscure but from the first person point of view, consciousness of something birth experience by intentionality i.e. the coordination and processing of what man sees, hears, smells, tastes and feels make up consciousness which in turn produce experiences. Of course, the brain is the main site of all these actions and it goes further to store these experiences as “memories”.

However, the memories stored in the brain are analyzed in different ways to produce perception. Without any analysis by the brain, the memories lack “meaning” and does make no sense. The degree of ability of the brain to make a sense out of a memory, based on what it understands before, determines the way in which it will analyze it to produce perception. Mind
you, the criteria for the degree of ability of the brain to analyze i.e. what it understand before, will be discussed in the following chapter as the philosopher pose the question, how does the brain know what it knows? So, by degree of ability of the brain to attach sense to a memory, two forms of perception can be produced: impression and idea.

An impression is produced if the brain’s ability to analyze, is at the highest, hence making it easy for it to attach sense to the memory. In other words, a “meaning” is easily extracted from the memory by the brain as far as it correlates with the pre-existing memories of experiences. The philosopher regards impression as the strong form of perception which is concrete in nature as it is, when formed, clear and evident in the brain. As for the second form of perception, idea, it results when the degree of ability of the brain to analyze a memory is at the lowest – so to speak, thus making it quite difficult for the brain to extract a clear meaning from the memory as it seems to be “new” and fails to correlates with pre-existing memories of experiences. So, the philosopher regards an idea as the weak form of perception which is abstract in nature, unclear and lacks certainty when produced in the brain.

In spite of these, the degree of ability of the brain to analyze – attach a sense to a memory – is continuous. By this, the philosopher means that, it – the degree of ability – can be represented as a spectrum with impression and idea marking the beginning and end from the highest to the lowest degree. Along the spectrum, there is a point whence the degree of ability is even to both sides i.e. the degree is at middle point, neither high nor low. This point, according to the philosopher perhaps, could be regarded as the point of confusion, where it is hard to understand if the perception formed is an impression or an idea. At this point, human, is said to be confused and thus, unable to ascertain his degree of ability.

Moreover, perception can also be formed in form of imagination which is derived only from the pre-existing memories of experiences as no present memory is involved. The degree of ability of the brain to form an imagination depends on how much it can retrieve pre-existing memories and put them together. Imaginations are short-lived, not quite evident as an impression i.e. unclear and therefore, the philosopher classify an imagination as an idea form of perception.
So with all these, the philosopher is able to understand how experiences from consciousness leads to perception and thereafter, he goes further in his quest to understand the “what” and “how” behind the existence of an argument. Earlier on in this text, the philosopher proposes that an argument is made up of premises and a conclusion, with the former producing the foundation on which the latter is built upon i.e. the former determines the latter.

However, premises are series of perceptions being analyzed in which the result determines the conclusion. In other words, perceptions are the central unit of an argument and the philosopher regards perceptions as the subject matter of an argument. Therefore, the philosopher posits that the nature of the perceptions – subject matter – that make up the premises determines the nature of conclusion and thus, brings about – the existence of – argument. So, as far as a subject matter is present, there will be an argument and no argument without a subject matter. This answers the question of “what” catalyzes the existence of an argument.

Using the analogy stated at the beginning of this chapter, when two intellectualistic beings meet and converse, the chance of having an argument depends on if a subject matter is present or not. Mind you, it is not necessary that each being brings up an argument at the same time as the argument can erupt only from a side – being –which the other side can agree to or not.

Furthermore, the philosopher also proposes that the forms of perceptions – the subject matter – determines the type of the resulting argument. He posits that an impression form of perception, since it is clear and evident when formed, tends to result into a deductive argument and an idea form of perception tends to result into an inductive argument due to its lack of certainty and unclear nature. Consequently, the imagination form of perception will most likely lead to an inductive argument rather than a deductive argument since it is an idea type of perception.
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