

Rethinking Plato's and Aristotle's Metaphysics of Conscious Soul and Conscious God

Dr. Jitendra Ram

Associate Professor, Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Del

Abstract

This article is rethinking Plato's metaphysics of conscious and rational soul, and rethinking Plato's metaphysics of Intellect (Consciousness) of God by proving inconsistencies in the Plato's arguments and by rethinking dialectic method and method of cosmological reason used by Plato in his books. This article is also rethinking Aristotle's metaphysics of Active (conscious) Intellect of soul and of Intellect of God. It is rethinking Aristotle's introspective method for soul's existence and method of cosmological reasoning for the existence of Intellect (consciousness) of God in his works.

Keywords: Plato, Aristotle, Soul Consciousness Rational Part, Active Intellect, God. Method, Neurophilosophy, Big Bang.

I. Introduction

Plato and Aristotle in many of their works have claimed the existence of conscious and rational soul and God. They both make claims but their claims is conflicting.

Plato's *Timaeus*, *Republic* *Phaedo*, *Meno* and also makes claim about God creating the soul from world soul stuff. Aristotle in many of his works like *On the Soul*, *Nicomachean Ethics* and *The Generation of Animals*, claims the existence of three kinds of souls. He says that only the active intellect in human soul is immaterial, immortal. Aristotle in his *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, proves the existence of teleological God or conscious God.

"Rethinking Plato's metaphysics of consciousness (Rational part) of soul and God is rethinking the arguments for rational (conscious) part of soul being immaterial, immortal and eternal in his works like *Phaedo*, *Meno* *Republic* and *Timaeus*. The dialectic method used in these works to claim the existence of soul is rethought this section is rethinking Plato's *Metaphysics* of consciousness (intellect) of God and rethinking method of cosmological reasoning as method to prove the existence of teleological conscious God.

Rethinking Aristotle's metaphysics of Intellect (Consciousness) of soul and God is rethinking Active Intellect of soul and Intellect of God. It is rethinking Aristotle's method of introspection for the existence of Active intellect and the method of cosmological reason for existence of Intellect of God.

Rethinking Plato's and Aristotle's metaphysics of conscious soul and conscious God is based on neurophilosophy and philosophy of contemporary cosmology in physics.

II. Rethinking Plato's Metaphysics of Consciousness of Soul and God

Rethinking Plato's metaphysics of consciousness of soul. Plato in his *Timaeus* claims that Demiurge created the soul out of soul-stuff of the universe. In *Republic* and in *Phaedo* Plato claim that soul has three parts, which loves, honour and irrational parts (Spirit part loves victory and an appetitive part which desires food, sex), the rational part which performs cognitive and intellectual function. The rational part discerns and contemplates truth, loves truths and seeks truth – the forms of the form of good. The rational part judges what is virtue and what is vice, what is justice and what is in justice. Reason is the faculty or capacity of soul to think. The rational faculty that establishes harmony in three parts of soul. Firstly the words like 'reason', contemplate 'judge', mean that these are conscious activity, intellectual activity, which is conscious activity. Rational part of soul is consciousness faculty and cognitive faculty and cognitive faculty. In *Republic* Plato says:

"Is there any function of soul that you could not accomplish with anything else, such as taking care of something, ruling and deliberating or contemplating and other things? Could we correctly assign these things to anything besides the soul, and they are the characteristics of it?"

No, to nothing else.

What about living? Will we deny that this is the function of soul? That is absolutely."

Plato, *Republic* here in the last sentences Socrates claims that soul enlivens the body. The soul gives life to body. Plato says that deliberating, quest for virtue, for caring for soul, reasoning are conscious activity. The intellectual virtue like wisdom is conscious activity. All these, intellectual conscious activity are the character of soul, and these characters inhere in soul.

In *Phaedo* Plato gives many arguments for proving immortality of soul and immateriality of soul. He says that these intellectual, consciousness faculty which thinks cannot be attributed to matter, and therefore these belong to immaterial entity-soul and therefore the soul doesn't die and is immortal. Soul is immaterial also because soul has ability to know eternal forms and necessary truths of mathematics through reason which the body cannot know. Only body dies which is divisible but soul is indivisible. Soul is immaterial and has conscious or rational faculty which survives the death of body and thinks after the death of body.

In *Phaedo* Plato says that soul is thinking thing and thinks after the deaths of the body:

"Soul still possess the same power and wisdom" After death of the body." Plato, *Phaedo*

Here Plato claims that existence of soul after the death of body and immortal soul still possesses intelligence.

Plato in his *Meno* gives slave boy argument to prove that soul is immortal and soul existed earlier in the previous lives. The body is able to remember or recollect mathematical or geometrical truth which was latent in memory from previous births, which the boy did not learn in this life. Plato in *Phaedo* states his recollection argument as :

"Your favourite doctrine, Socrates that our learning is simply recollection, if true, also necessarily implies a previous time in which we have learned that which we now recollect. But this would be

impossible unless our soul had been somewhere before existing in this form of man, here then is another proof of the soul's immortality." Plato, *Phaedo*, 72 e-73a

1. Rethinking Rational or Consciousness Faculty of Soul

Plato's metaphysics of reason or consciousness must be rethought and rejected for the reasons given below.

The Plato's claim in *Republic* that rational faculty / consciousness faculty of soul discerns eternal form and geometrical mathematical truth and is capable of knowing and contemplating these truth make it immaterial. The claim of Plato in *Phaedo* that soul is thinking things and that rational faculty can know the eternal truths through reasoning which cannot be known by body makes soul immaterial.

Firstly the claims of *Republic* and *Phaedo* must be rejected because these claim do not prove the immateriality of reason and consciousness. Secondly, the Philosophy of neuro-science of consciousness and neuro-science of reason reject the claims of Plato saying that cognitive activities or intellectual activities belongs physical brain and not immaterial soul. The seat of reason and judgement is the human physical brain particularly in the Neo-cortex or pre-frontal cortex which is evolutionary in nature.

Thirdly, the claim of Plato in *Phaedo* that soul a thinking entity after death, it has the same power and wisdom, must be rethought because soul being immaterial and soul's being indivisible doesn't prove the immortality of soul. According to Neuro-Philosophy death of a person is death of mind, death of reason, death of conscious activity / intellectual activity. There is no proof for the existence rational / conscious part of soul. There is no proof for the existence of wisdom or intelligence. Therefore the claim of Plato in *Phaedo* that soul think even after the death of body is rejected.

Fourthly the claim of Plato in *Meno* and *Phaedo* that soul is conscious knower and recollector of knowledge of form and knowledge of mathematical truth learned in previous lives or past lives must be rethought because by perceiving beautiful things or equal things in sensible world is nothing but remembering or recalling the form of beauty or form of equality seen or known in previous lives or the form seen by soul while travelling with God Zeus is not convincing and seems fantasy. Fifthly these claim is rejected by Neuroscientists and philosopher of neuroscience of memory Erik Kandel according to which memory and knowledge or learning happens within the brain when synaptic connections takes place. There is no memory of past life because there is no past life, the claim of existence knower soul in past life is rejected. The seat of memory is the brain-the hippocampus and not the immaterial and immortal soul.

Firstly, the dialectic method in *Republic* and *Phaedo* of Plato must be rethought. The dialectic method is used to establish the metaphysics of soul's rational (or consciousness part) being immaterial and then immortal. The method must be rethought because through only dialogue or reasoned arguments or philosophical arm chair reasoning without objective experimental method, the truth of metaphysics of soul being immaterial and immortal and soul, thinking and remaining conscious even after the death of person cannot be determined.

The scientific method in neuroscience of self and consciousness rejects the claim of dialectic method about the soul being immateriality rational and immortality rational.

Secondly the reason as method in *Phaedo* and in *Republic* of Plato to claim the truth of metaphysics of soul being immaterial and immortal because the intellect or reason of soul discerns or knows the truth of form and mathematics and not the sense perception as method. But reason as method for determining the truth of soul being immaterial and immortal must be rethought because subjective reason cannot determine the truth through reason. The reason is not objective evidence.

Therefore both the dialectic method and method reason in *Phaedo* and *Republic* fail to prove the claims of soul being immaterially rational and immorally ration.

2. Rethinking Plato's Metaphysics of Consciousness or Intellect of God

This section is rethinking metaphysics of intellect of God by rethinking dialectic method and cosmological reason as method.

Plato in *Laws* and *Timaeus* claims that the beauty, order and motion perceptible in the universe (once upon a time the universe was in state of chaos) is created by devine craftsman - Demiurge of supreme wisdom and intelligence.

This is cosmological argument (argument from motion) for proving the existence of God through the method of cosmological reasoning.

Plato in *Timaeus* claims God – is rational or conscious designer of world. God is intellect, God has teleological thinking in crafting the teleological world by immitating the mathematical order which is eternal and unchanging order. God is the creator of soul with rational and irrational part out the residue of soul stuff of the universe.

The dialect method in *Laws* and in *Timaeus* of Plato for claiming the truth of metaphysics of Intellect or Demiurge who is rational or conscious and who has teleological thinking must be rethought because how can through dialogue only among characters in the books can prove the existence of God with supreme wisdom and intelligence.

The claim of this subjective method is rejected by scientific method in contemporary cosmology in physics which claims that order and beauty in the universe is because of the laws of physics of universe born from the big bang.

Cosmological reasoning as method for claiming the metaphysics of God should be rejected for the above reasoning based on evidence from the experimental method in physics. Cosmological reasoning method and dialectic method can not take us to the beginning of universe to see whether universe has divine cause or material cause.

III. Rethinking Aristotle's Metaphysics of Intellect (Consciousness) of Soul and God

This section is rethinking, Aristotle's metaphysics of active intellect of soul and of intellect of God which is immaterial. Rethinking is based on claim by scientific method of evolutionary biology which claims that reasoning, self-contemplation, self-consciousness is not immaterial rather material. This section is also rethinking Aristotle's philosophical method of Introspection and cosmological reason.

Aristotle in his many writings explains soul, for example in *Nichomachean Ethics*, *The Generation of Animals* and *On the Soul (De Anima)*. Soul is essence of living beings because soul enlivens the body. He discusses three kinds of soul in *On the Soul* possessed by different kinds of living beings. The vegetative soul capable of nourishment is possessed by plant. The sensitive soul possessed by animals has capacity for nourishment, mobility and sensation. Rational soul possessed only by humans has capacity for thought, reflection, self unconscious, self-contemplation and consciousness.

He says in *On the Soul* that soul as whole is mortal. The vegetative soul in plants, the vegetative and sensitive soul in animals die with the death of body of plants and animals.; The vegetative soul (nourishment, reproduction and growth) and sensitive part of soul (mobility, sensation) in human die with the death of human body and only the rational part of soul or intellect of soul is immortal, deathless and immaterial because the rational part of soul or intellect is power, in soul, comes from outside human body. The intellect in human comes from God, The intellect of soul is equal to God, identical to God, and since God is immaterial, God is immortal therefore rational part of soul is immaterial and immortal. Since God is pure actuality without matter and immaterial, and intellect of soul comes God, therefore intellect is immaterial. Aristotle describes intellect as follows:

"Intellect or reason as apart of soul by which it knows and understand' Aristotle *On the Soul*.

Soul is immaterial also because soul understands itself through inner perception and it knows and understand the world through rational part of soul. The understanding and knowing cannot be the attribute of body and material, but only the attribute of soul therefore soul is immaterial.

Aristotle in *On the Soul* divides rational soul into two faculty (i) passive or receptive intellect which passively receives ideas about the world and about the mind. The receptive intellect stores the idea in the rational part.

(ii) Active intellect or agent intellect – this faculty has capacity for recalling, combining the ideas available in the passive intellect. It has capacity for, thought, reflection, consciousness – self consciousness or self-awareness, knowing and understanding. These are intrinsic and essential part of immaterial and immortal soul. The active intellect has self awareness. Aristotle describes :

"We perceive that we see and hear" Aristotle, *On the Soul* 3-6

"Perceiving that we perceive" Aristotle, *On the Soul* 3-2.

He says that we "sense the sensing" and that we are aware of sensation of external objects and internal perception.

He defines self-consciousness or self awareness as : "It is thinkable just as the thought objects are " Aristotle, *On the Soul* 3.4.

Aristotle use of words like 'thinking', 'reason', 'intellect', 'know', understand, self- awareness are, I think, forms of consciousness. Self consciousness is essential feature of human soul. Aristotle claims that soul

is immaterial also because soul or active intellect can contemplate itself and it can understand order and purpose in the universe created by God, it can contemplate the first cause uncaused God and it can contemplate first principle, which cannot be the feature of matter, therefore soul is immaterial.

1. Rethinking Active Intellect (consciousness part) of soul.

Firstly, the claims of Aristotle that what makes soul immaterial is that soul has capacity to know, self-contemplation, contemplation of God and contemplation of first principles must be rethought because if active intellect can contemplate itself and God doesn't make or prove the soul's immaterial. Secondly, the consciousness, self-consciousness, is essential feature of immaterial and immortal soul must be rejected because the philosophy of biological evolution of reason and neuro-philosophy claim that reason is evolutionary in nature and reason is product of brain or physical processes in the brain. Reason and consciousness are the features of physical brain and rational part is not the feature immaterial soul. The seat of reason is neocortex. The claim of Aristotle that Active Intellect of soul is immortal and can exist without body is also rejected by philosophy of Neuroscience of death or neuro-philosophy which claims that death of body and brain is the death of reason, death of neo-cortex and death of rational part in human.

Fourthly the claim of Aristotle in *On the Soul* and in *The Generation of Animals* that soul is immaterial and immortal because the rational part of soul in human comes from God who is immaterial (pure actuality) and immortal, must be rethought because the reasoning from existence of reason, awareness and consciousness in the soul through inner observation or introspection of claiming the rational part of soul coming from God or is identical to God is erroneous unprovable. There is no evidence for rational part of soul coming from God or rational part being identifiable or equitable with God.

2. Rethinking Aristotle's Introspection or Inner observation method

Aristotle's philosophical method of introspection or inner observation for claiming is immaterial soul which enlivens the body and which is capable of thought, self-contemplation on the basis of method of introspection must be rethought, firstly, because the introspection is subjective. Secondly, through subjective method of introspection, Aristotle claim that rational part is identical to God in unproved and is claiming more than introspection can allow. Thirdly, Aristotle philosophical method of reason to prove soul is immaterial because self-contemplation and Knowing is not possible through matter and possible only through rational soul. The reasoning in the soul should be immaterial and immortal because rational part of soul is equitable with God who is pure actuality without matter and therefore immaterial immortal must be rejected because reason do not prove soul be immaterial and immortal. The evidence from neuro-scientific method on the study of consciousness and reason disprove the reason of Aristotle who prove souls immateriality and immortality. Philosophical method of reason or cosmological reasoning cannot take us to the time and place where and when the creation by God of the world and when the intellect from God came to human body.

3. Rethinking Aristotle's metaphysics of consciousness or Intellect of God

Aristotle in *Physics*, Book VIII and in *Metaphysics*, Book XII, Chapter-7-10 proves the existence of unmoved first-mover who has impartial motion to the universe. His teleological intellect has created teleological universe which has order and purpose, points to existence of God, can be discovered by active intellect of soul.

God is immaterial because God is pure actuality, fully actualized. Aristotle describes God as :
"The most divine of the things observed by us" as thinking of thinking" Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book XII.

God is being who thinks itself, contemplates himself, which is perfect contemplation. Aristotle explains how God and the active intellect of soul is related. Alexander of Aphrodisiac (the commentator on Aristotle) and other commentator have interpreted that *Metaphysics*, Book XII, Aristotle equates the active intellect of soul with unmoved mover God. He says that when people contemplate or think, their active intellect becomes God, because it is God who makes one think. For Aristotle commentators, states Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy

"Active intellect of soul is not only the biggest activity of the human soul, but also the divine and transcendent principle of cosmic order".

Long A.A. Nous, Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy

In Internet Encyclopedia of philosophy, Justin Humphreys, claims that commentators have interpreted book XII of *metaphysics* as equating the active intellect with God.

"According to such view, every act of thinking is also an act of divine illumination in which God actuates (causes) one's thinking power."

Justin Humphrey, Aristotle, in Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

Firstly, the claim of *Metaphysics* and *Physics* that God the first cause uncaused, first mover unmoved is eternal, immaterials, the being who has capacity for self contemplation, who his self-consciousness, must be rethought because the philosophical method of reason for existence of God who is immaterial, who thinks itself, doesn't prove such God. The cosmological reasoning as method cannot take us to the time when God was imparting motion to the universe and placing order and purpose in the universe.

Secondly the claim of commentators of Aristotle, who equate active intellect with God, must also be rethought because such claim is unproved. "There is not objective evidence for the equation. The contemporary cosmology in physics claim that the order in the universe is creation of laws of physics which are the product of big bang The scientific method rejects the claim of Aristotle's philosophical method of introspection and cosmological reasoning regarding intellect of soul and God.

IV. Conclusion

Plato's metaphysics of rational or conscious part of soul and intellect (consciousness) of God and Aristotle's metaphysics of Active intellect of soul and intellect of God must be rethought because the outcome of contemporary research on the origin, emergence of self and consciousness in Genetic, Evolutionary Biology and Neuroscience and outcome of contemporary and current research on the

origin of universe falsifies the claims of Plato's and Aristotle about the divine origin of conscious self and immortality of soul and existence of God.

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