

An Anti-Objectivism Study of Borderland and Border Crossing

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Abstract

Spanning a number of academic areas, “An anti-objectivist study of Border Crossing” focuses on the inaccuracies of the current objectivism conception of border and borderland to the conclusion that if the subject/object dichotomy is real and external reality is true, causation will be logically impossible, and cross-border migration will be unattainable. The only condition by which the possibility of human and cross border interaction may continue to enjoy wide approval is to ensure that it is founded upon a logic precondition other than the one that had rendered it bizarre. It must be admitted though, that what emerges from this discussion is an idea that will undoubtedly require further defense. Usually, the view that people often opt for the border (physically, mentally and possibly spiritually as a way towards comfort) is a common occurrence. Examples could be found in moments of social crisis such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine when Ukrainians rushed towards the Border in order to escape into Poland. Even in daily conversations, people are sometimes said to be on the fence, mostly to avoid being attacked. Based on their position either for or against, they sometimes prefer to stand on the fence (border). On the other hand, unfortunately, borders are the most fiercely contested and controversial spaces. These happen because the borderland is not as indubitable as they tend to appear. This paper, employing the method of logical and historical analyses has attempted to make a proposal new intellectual geography capable of ensuring the logical prospects of border crossing, and consequently of logical, mental and physical human migration toward proposing a review of the current dominant policies on visa and migration.

Key Words: Border-crossing, Migration, Objectivism, Philosophy, Anti-Objectivity

Introduction

Spanning a number of academic areas, this article; “An anti-objectivism study of Border Crossing” focuses on the inaccuracies of the current and extreme objectivist's conception of object/subject relation and consequently of border and borderland to the conclusion that if the subject/object dichotomy is real and external reality is true, causation will be logically impossible, and cross-border migration will be unattainable. On the one hand unfortunately, objectivism refers to an extreme form of the naive belief which has become theoretically fashionable that an object of thought is completely apart and independent of the thinking subject. On the other hand, the only condition by which the possibility of human and cross border interaction may continue to enjoy wide approval is to ensure that it is founded upon a logic other than the one that had rendered it bizarre. It must be admitted though, that what emerges from this discussion is an idea that will undoubtedly require further defense.

Usually, the view that people often opt for the border (physically, mentally and possibly spiritually as a way towards comfort) is a common occurrence. Examples could be found in moments of social crisis such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine when Ukrainians rushed towards the border in order to escape into Poland. Even in daily conversations, people are sometimes said to be on the fence, mostly to avoid being attacked. Based on their position either for or against, they sometimes prefer to stand on the fence (border). On the other hand, unfortunately, borders (Methi, 213-223) are the most fiercely contested and controversial spaces. These happen because the borderland is not as indubitable as they tend to appear. This paper, employing the method of logical and historical analyses has attempted to make a proposal for new intellectual geography capable of ensuring the logical prospects of border crossing, and consequently of logical, mental and physical human migration.

Objectivism, especially in its absolute configuration has been subjected to ridicule by scholars such as Protagoras even from the ancient era. It is traditionally held that if objectivism is true or applicable, then relativism is necessarily false and vice versa. Scholars have considered either or both objectivism and subjectivism as something whose truth are independent of the analysing mind. Not even subjectivist is different in this regard. They also feel that what they have said is true about subjectivism and should be taken seriously as an objective or person-independent truth. Given the complexities, and given the crucial relationship between objectivism and the entire body of philosophic pursuits, it becomes urgent and necessary to examine the relation between the analyser and the analysis that she/he makes. On the one hand, the purpose in mind for doing so is to be able to clearly show that what is often referred to as knowing is more than anything else a process of self-projection. Ultimately, this exercise is aimed at exposing the arbitrariness of imagining physical and objective borders as well as border restrictions in migration studies as well as in mental, spiritual and physical situations.

In carrying out the objectives of this work, it is divided into two. Combining the methods of historical and conceptual analysis, the first part examines philosophy and the relationship it bears with migration in order to help grounding the proposed alternative anti-objectivism perception of borderland in the second part.

Philosophy and Migration

The possibility and existence of human movement and migration is often seen as given and therefore taken for granted, not only by scholars of migration studies but also by philosophers within the spheres of both theoretical and practical or applied philosophy. The philosophy of migration studies and the succeeding boom in empirical work on migration (de Haas, 2007: 3) unfortunately, emerges from the background of the epistemological crisis of the contemporary era, which stifles the possibility and fails to intellectually guarantee human existence, and the existence of physical space and time.

Scholars have generally taken it for granted that human agents do migrate and change positions from one location to the other. Because they take the phenomena of change, movement and migration for granted, there is hardly any concerted effort to examine the conditions, which on the one hand, make such change and movement possible and, which on the other hand make knowledge claims on it appear legitimate, reliable, theoretically viable and natural (Pardo *et al*, 293-313, Pierce, 271-279, Zhang and Jacob, 91-102). Philosophers from the ancient time have been examining and reviewing examinations on it (Cordero, 231-246, Owen, 84-102), therefore we need not commit much effort to going any further on the issue of whether human movement is a reality or a ruse.

Furthermore, the entire edifice of the social sciences is founded on the belief in the possibility and existence of human agent, change and consequently human migration. There is a new way of thinking orchestrated by the search for the clear and distinct as exemplified by Rene Descartes, which according to Richard Taylor (106-107) consists of dividing things into exclusive categories and superficial oppositions of 'either/or' in all aspects (Pigliucci, 7-15). In reality however, these perceived demarcations are superficial. Very often we assume distinctions between events and things, and by extension we assume that individuation is a reality and necessity rather than matters of convenience and human convention. In this wise, it is usually assumed, albeit carelessly, that there is a distance between locations A and B. If in reality there is a distance between point A and point B, such a distance is either an empty vacuum or a filled space. An empty space is one in which there are no substances of any sort and there are no forces of any type including force of gravity; a complete vacuum. One of the questions that physics has not answered definitively is whether it is possible to cross an empty space? Logically, it seems impossible to go past an empty location; doing so would presumably lead into jumping into an abyss. An empty space cannot rest on a solid ground, just as the same way a solid earth or even a heavy sky cannot rest on an empty vacuum below.

However, if there is no empty space as some philosophers have argued (McKirahan, 5-26, Heidegger, 52-54), movement is necessarily impeded. A filled space is necessarily impenetrable and therefore does not permit movement. Movement is itself an indication of an empty space. If the universe is tightly filled by any substance including atoms, it will be impossible to move through at the same time. It does not seem probable that atoms are logically penetrable. Moving through implied that there are empty spaces unfilled which the moving object can fill at every minute moment of its movement through. It is even more logically unimaginable that spaces are made up of a mixture of substances and vacuum, the two are logically exclusive.

Alternative Perception of Borderland

It is important now to propose an alternative perception of borderland by examining the type of multidisciplinary initiated and orchestrated by scholars of Arts. Alhwalia was one of the earliest to consider the non-physical dimension of border crossing. Though Alhwalia was discussing about geographic (physical) borderlands, nevertheless, reference to cultural borders implies something distinctive. In Alhwalia's opinion, border intellectuals are scholars who could be located in more than one culture. Some of them were born in one culture and voluntarily migrate to the other, while others were forced to identify with or unwillingly migrate to another. He refers to the former as the syncretic border intellectuals and the latter specular.

The syncretic intellectuals, according to him are likely to be at home with both the new and the old cultures unlike specular border intellectuals who could be unwilling or unable to accommodate either or both of the conceptual schemes. Among border scholars, as endorsed by Ahluwalia (1), the nature, focus and direction of their theoretical outlook is influenced by the nature of their component borders.

According to Ahluwalia (4-5) the specular intellectual such as Edward Said W. E. B. Dubois and Zora Neale Hurston are critical of both cultures and utilizes his or her intellectual cultural space as a vantage position from which to define others. Their ambivalent status creates some tensions in them. Such an internalised tension is not limited to Specular border intellectuals. The syncretic border intellectuals such as Wole Soyinka, Salman Rushdie and Chinua Achebe, who all are well known African scholars, in spite of being immigrants rather than exiles also experience some sort of ambivalence as they never totally belong to either of both cultures. Alhwalia states further that the border crossing could be social, psychological or physical. At this juncture it is not clear whether there is a scholar who has not crossed any border in the first place, it is nevertheless important to know. Scholars in the sciences appear to be different only because they tend to deal with objective realities and non-human phenomena. Even on these, even if physical objects tend to be person-independent, the scholars' knowledge of them not too independent of the knowing scholars.

Alhwalia's theorisation is an ambitious pursuit of the possibility of scientific study of human behaviour. Applying Alhwalia's criteria specifically on Soyinka and Achebe for instance, one expects the duo to be perfectly similar in kind, focus, and approach, degree and view. Though both scholars are believed to be Pan-Africanist and both are leading African scholars in the discipline of Arts; Achebe a novelist and Soyinka a playwright, these two scholars though are thought to be syncretic scholars by the analysis of Alhwalia, are more of opposites to each other. While Achebe is pedagogical in approach, Soyinka writes more for the elite class.

In fact, the popularity of Achebe hinges on the fact that people who read his text comprise of both those who eventually become scholars and those who never gone beyond the secondary school level of education. Achebe does not hide the fact that he is a pan-Africanist of an Igbo nationalist bent and therefore would want to identify more with the beliefs and aspirations of the Igbo nation.

Soyinka, though a pan-Africanist also, does not see such projects such as Ujamaa, consciencism or negritude as principal and overriding projects for pan-Africanism. Therefore,

Soyinka criticises the traditional pan-African project itself. While Achebe sometimes give the impression that certain core Igbo expressions can only be expressed in the language of its origin, Soyinka employs the pigeon English sometimes called the broken English in his playwright such as the *Kogi harvest* or the *Beatification of the Area Boy*. It is also not surprising that Achebe died in Boston while Soyinka claimed that he has denounced his dual citizenship. If Soyinka is nicknamed A Yoruba globalist for trying to project the Yoruba literature and arts to compete at the global level with the Western, Achebe would prefer to be called an Igbo glocalist for his unwavering support for the renaissance project. If therefore, the causes of their migration were external to them and had determined them as the naive empiricists have attempted to persuade us to believe, these scholars who are similar in age and profession should have always made similar choices always.

Following the traditional epistemology, causes of human actions are external to the actor. People migrate in search of opportunities or to escape unpleasant situations or even to explore other opportunities and experiences. Scientific explanations support the thinking therefore that:

1. Objectivity means person independent, an objectivism is an extreme, naïve and ideological acceptance of objectivism.
2. Person-independent implies that the object of knowledge and its cause is not part of the subject.
3. Causes of human actions are external to the actor
4. Among competing candidates, one (or one set of) particular event or phenomenon among the most clearly perceivable is the true cause of an action.

By application, the dominant empiricist (science) oriented thinking is that the reason why a person migrates is the cause of the person's act of migration; the reason why a person migrates and the borderland itself must necessarily be external to the actor.

As earlier argued, based on the empiricist orientation and motivation, scholars have paid attention to less fundamental issues and questions previously. They have asked questions such as: what is a borderland?" or/and "where is the border?" with physically observable geographical spaces in mind. Supporting the scientific outlook and choice of questions are some of the main scientific theses also outlined, that: objectivism means an unqualified person-independent; person-independent implies that the object is not part of the subject; causes of human actions are external to the actor, and that an event may be considered to be the cause of another event basically because it is professionally, geographically, ideologically or even conventionally fashionable to believe so. For instance, it was once scientifically fashionable in its time to think that the world was a plain land with edges from which an object could fall off into an abyss.

For the above reasons, it becomes level-headed to accuse the dominant theoretical fashion on border crossing and migration studies of overt ideological adoption of the method of science (sciencism or objectivism). By implication, the earliest set of leading scholars in the field had pushed some epistemologically very important issues to the tangent. They have neglected some other and, perhaps more important questions. These questions include questions such as "what does it look like to be in a borderland?" or "what does it look like to be a border crosser?"

What is the relationship between the border and the border crosser? Rather than the naive assumption that there are some set of factors that would necessarily affect or influence the choice of actions that people make or give the false impression that there is the possibility of scientific study of human behaviour the way a scientist will study atoms, butterflies and trees. By seeing a border as an externally observable event, they equally conceive it as a static object whose dimensions can be observed at points in time. This impression is false because borders are constantly and perpetually being created to such an extent that at any point that we are conscious of a border being created, the border most likely has ceased to exist and numerous (uncountable) other borders have simultaneously been created. The border therefore is not a static event. It is a continuous mental analysis.

The analyst (the philosopher) cannot logically conceive himself as separate from the analysis that he makes. If the border is an on-going continuous analysis and creation of an active mind, it is only humble enough to admit that the border cannot be external to the maker. By implication therefore, a border consists, not merely the external components, but also, and importantly, the internal. Suffice it to say that the border crossers are themselves part of the borders that they cross, no less than the border analysts are part and parcel of the borderlines and analyses that they make in the process of making their analyses.

Part of the neglected aspect of reality that has escaped the perception of the irreconcilable extremes of empiricism and rationalism and their phenomenological alternative therefore is that the philosopher himself is an important determinant part of the analyses that he makes. The analysis that he makes is merely a self-projection of who he is and is made of. If this is anything logically consistent with the foregoing argument therefore, the philosopher is himself part of the analysis that he makes. If this is true then the philosopher is both, the border, the borderland and the border crosser.

In addition, the professionally fashionable demarcation we create between places, events and phenomena which we perceive as static borderlines including the physical borders, we create are all arbitrary and merely artificially and unreal barriers. They should therefore not be taken too seriously as to lose lives of humans for whose convenience the artificial borders are created. This also explains the variation in human perception. Whatever appears to me in a manner in which it appears to another observer does not do so on the account that it has multiple natures. The difference lies in the differences between observers.

In the process of revolutionising human thought therefore, it is mistaken for scholars (philosophers), to see themselves as distanced from the objects of their analyses. A Philosopher is, very unlike mere technicians who, attempt to follow to the letter the method, policies, theories, laws and models dominant in their fields without questioning. The difference between philosophers and technicians lies in the ability of philosophers to see themselves as part of the analyses that they make in order to be able to identify when there is the need to moderate an overarching human influence. The point however, is that in the process of knowing the other, the philosopher knows him/herself, and the philosopher is him/herself part of the analysis that he/she makes.

In partial recognition or admission of the foregoing position that the philosopher examines his own situation and that he is part of the border he sets Socrates examined his own life, and the same goes for existentialists such as Sartre, Marcel and Camus. Ludwig Wittgenstein is

arguably one of the leading apostles of objectivism and its allied concepts such as certainty and positivism of probably of higher or the same class like Bertrand Russell (444), Gjertsen (114-7), Psillos (618-657), Aspers (1-23) and Sihvola (12-22). He believes that epistemology involves the isolation and circumvention of "anti-concepts", mental monstrosities or "floating abstractions" which do not succeed in referring to any external reality. In *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1, 1.1, 5.62-5.63) he argues that the world is all there is, but towards the end of the text he acknowledges that the world and life are one and that "I am my world." P. F. Strawson (73) also argues that the public world that he discusses is not independent of him (himself).

This article has at least called attention to the compelling need for philosophical examination of the relationship between philosophy and a cognate field of migration studies as well as the relationship that the philosopher bears with the analysis that he makes. At this juncture, it becomes necessary and urgent to review the existing dominant conception of border and borderland as something objectively out there. The main thesis of this paper is that following the argument that; individual choices are reflections of a conglomeration and synergy of the level of knowledge, belief, fears, aspirations and past experiences of the individual, the philosopher is inseparable from the analysis that he makes because his analyses are reflections of his fears, beliefs, level of knowledge, experiences and choices. In fact, he is himself the analyses that he makes. In the same vein, borderlands are dependent on the mind rather than being objectively person-independent. Therefore, perception of and inhuman treatment of others based on the fluid and constantly changing element called border, boundary and borderland requires some further and constant review.

Conclusion

Philosophers have theorised on several issues ranging from anthropological and social to natural and purely mathematical issues, but it was observed that very little has been said about the relationship that exists between philosophical analysis and the philosopher that makes them such that it is assumed that unless there is no relationship between the analysis and the philosopher making them there can be no reliable truth in the analysis. Based on this enduring controversy in philosophy regarding objectivism and subjectivism, the paper explains the need to pay theoretical attention to the relationship between philosophers and the analysis that they make. The position of this paper is that epistemological polarizing between the knowing subject and object necessarily creates an intellectual border that cannot be crossed, and such a person-independent world cannot be known.

In spite of the subject/object logical dichotomy, scholars have taken human interactions resulting from migration for granted. The paper has argued that since borderlands are real only because they were first mental creations and as mental creations they are not fixed, objective and unchanging, then there is the need for caution in the treatment of fellow humans as though through various restrictions as though borders and borderlands are all-time static physical events, person-independent truths and rigidly fixed points of demarcations. The paper therefore proposes an alternative intellectual geography that opens a new horizon in the conception of human action using the example of human migration, borders and border-crossing.

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