

AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCE OF BEING THROUGH THE PROCESS OF NEOTIC PROPAEDEUTIC

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Abstract

According to Asouzu I. Innocent, "...the way people see the world are subject to diverse conditions, mechanisms and circumstances that determine them(Ibuanyindanda,70)". From his inaugural lecture, part of these conditions, mechanisms and circumstances seems to come from education, socialisation and indoctrination, which are very "sharp", in that, they form the basis upon which we investigate and relate with the world either scientifically or socially; which is evident in the way we approach truth, relate with one another, view the opposite sex, share societal roles and responsibility, lead in organisations, etc. Consequently, this can prevent us from enjoying an authentic experience of being, if the mind does not have the spirit of ibuanyindanda or is not train in a way that makes it to be intan dem with a complementary comprehensive disposition that views anything that exist as that which serves a missing link of reality. Therefore, the process of neotic propaedeutic becomes a veritable tool for aiding us penetrate the savour of authentic experience of being, because already, as Asouzu makes it seems, the western education is caught in the web of Aristotle's bifurcation of reality in his metaphysics, which I vehemently agree. This paper attempts to show how we can we can enjoy authentic experience of being, through the process of neotic propaedeutic.

Introduction

To underscore the topic of this paper judiciously will entail a systematic approach. Thus, I will start with the metaphysical problem of being and the aspect in which Ibuanyindanda's philosophy tries to address, Aristotle's bifurcation of of being into substance and essence, it underlining mindset, it ontological adverse effects on humanity and the need for an authentic experience of being, before going to the crux of the paper: authentic experience of being through the process of neotic propaedeutic. This paper is written in this order. Before then, let us clarify some of the major concepts upon which the message of

this paper has its pivot. They are: ontology, Ibuanyindanda, philosophy of essence, ibuaru, ethnocentric commitment, etc.

Ontology

Thomas Hofweber defines it as "the study of what there is". From the foregoing, it is safe to deduce that ontology is the critical study of anything that exists, so as to determine the underlining principles of things, what it means for something to be in existence or the criterion for determining that which exists. It asks questions like: what is being? What does it mean for something to exist? Does GOD exist? Etc, and tries to proffer solutions to the questions it raises. Thus, aside from asking questions concerning the origin, nature and constituents of reality, ontology also seeks to provide an enabling horizon within which the idea of being can be articulated and grasped.

Ibuanyindanda

Ibuanyindanda is a new ontological horizon provided by the idea of comprehensive complementarity which seeks to eradicate the difficulties posed by Aristotle's bifurcation of reality into substance and accidents, which has coloured our minds with the belief that substance and accidents lie in diverse regions and that substance does not need accidents to exist because it has the capacity to exist on its own. On the other hand, accidents cannot exist on their own but rather rely on substance for their own existence. In this sense, the new complementary ontology, ibuanyindanda, states that anything that is such that serves a missing link of reality or that which has the capacity to be in a mutual complementary relationship with all things that exist. Ibuanyindanda's philosophy is propounded by Asouzu I. Innocent and he defines it as thus;

Ibuanyindanda philosophy is a transcendent complementary comprehensive systematic inquiry into the structure and dynamics of human consciousness as to determine the reason for the subject object tension and dichotomy by reason of which the ego always seeks its autonomy outside the foundation of its unity. It is an attempt at addressing this tension with a view to providing workable solutions towards its containment in a complementary comprehensive mutually harmonised fashion (inaugural lecture, 38).

The concept *Ibuanyindanda*, according to Asouzu is derived from the Igbo vocabulary. It is a composite word made up of the following three parts:

Ibu = load or task

Anyi = not insurmountable for

Danda = danda(a species of ants)

When these three words are added together, they mean thus: no load or task is not insurmountable for danda. The concept *ibuanyindanda* draws its inspiration from the teachings of the traditional Igbo philosophers of the complementary system of thought... This is inferred from observing a species of ants called danda. These ants have the capacity to carry heavy loads that are bigger and heavier than themselves. What this implies is that they can surmount very difficult tasks when they are mutually dependent on each other in the complementation of their efforts, not in an isolated manner as the mindset of Aristotle's bifurcation would have us believe (emphasis mine. *ibuanyindanda*, pg 11).

Missing link

According to Oxford dictionaries (online) missing link is defined as "A thing that is needed in order to complete a series, provide continuity, or gain complete knowledge"

Philosophy of Essence

To understand the expression "philosophy of essence", it is pertinent to first of all, understand Aristotle's bifurcation of reality into substance and accident, which is the crux of his metaphysics (however, the expression: "Philosophy of Essence" is Asouzu's coinage). According to Asouzu, Aristotle had bifurcated reality into two: substance or essence and accident in his metaphysics. Quoting from Aristotle's metaphysics to support his point, he writes:

Thus, for Aristotle, all beings are constituted of substance and accidents. (Metaphysica Book A, 2, 6, 8). On their part the substance or essence, belongs to the real character of being, because: if these are not substance, there is no substance

and no being at all; for the accidents of these it cannot be right to call beings(inaugural lecture,pg 15).

Abstracting from this, we can infer that for Asouzu, according to Aristotle, essence is the immutable, incorrigible being that is the real character of being, and largely, it can exist without the accident. The accident is the mutable, imperfect and corrigible beings that appear in the physical world, which cannot exist on it own without the essence. Hence, Asouzu argues that One of the things most striking about Aristotle metaphysical teaching is that it is conceptualised with a mindset that sees reality, human interpersonal relationship and science in a polarised, exclusivist, non-complementary mode(inaugural lecture, pg 15 and 16). Consequently, the expression “philosophy of essence” as postulated by Asouzu, designate any attempt to understand and relate to reality after the mindset of Aristotle’s metaphysics. It is the attempt to relate to the world in a disjointed, disharmonious, exclusivist, polarising mode as to negate the mutual complementary interrelatedness between all existent realities(Inaugural Lecture, 16).

Unintended Ethnocentric Commitment

This is another coinage invented by Asouzu. I wish to quote directly from him for the purpose of clarity:

By unintended ethnocentrism or unintended ethnocentric commitment... I refer to that tendency for philosophers or scientist to go about their subject matter with ethnocentric frame of the mind but unintentionally. Here, inquirers allow the basic assumption of their inquiry to be controlled by e dictates of what I call their raw primary cognitive ambience. It is an attempt to project and protect the legacies of one's cultural affiliation, at the risk of being exclusivist, though unintentionally(Ibuaru, pg 36).

However, it has to be emphasised that Asouzu believes that this ethnocentric commitment is not intentional. Thus, he gives the following as his reason for reasoning so:

I call the phenomenon an “unintended intrusion” “because there is every indication that in spite of the declared goodwill of many researchers and thinkers to steer the course of scientific objectivity in their philosophical endeavours, there are often worrisome traces of unintended ethnocentric commitment in their minds and thinking. These are some of those biases arising from our value commitments; most especially because of the excessive importance we attach to matters that concern us most, and matters relating to our ethnic and tribal affiliations. In most cases, in doing philosophy, we often wish to uphold and defend our ethnic and tribal identities and values no matter how hard we try to steer an objective course” (Asouzu, Ibuanyidanda 13).

The Metaphysical Problem Of Being

Metaphysics is one of the traditional branches of philosophy that probes into the fundamental cause of all existent being (Kanu). To do this successfully, it investigate into the nature and origin of being and what it means for something to exist. It asks questions such as; what is being? Is being limited to sensible reality or does it have a supra-sensible dimension. If it has, which one comes first? Which one is the substratum, which one should we trust? Which one is more important? Can they survive on their own independently or do they need each other to survive or can one survive even without they existence of the other, if so, which one? Does GOD exist? If HE does, why is there evil in the world? Why are they ungodly progressing and they good ones perishing? Where does evil come from if GOD is the creator of all things. These and many more questions alike are what preoccupy the mind of the philosopher of metaphysics or metaphysician. However, he does not stop by pondering on them as ends in themselves, but uses them as a means to proffering solutions to some of the major challenges of humanity.

Aristotle was the first to systematically approach the metaphysical problem of being. This is evident in his metaphysical system. S. Marc Cohen adumbrates this point aptly in the following statements:

The first major work in the history of philosophy to bear the title “Metaphysics” was the treatise by Aristotle that we have come to know by that name. But Aristotle himself did not use that title or even describe his

field of study as 'metaphysics'; the name was evidently coined by the first century C.E. editor who assembled the treatise we know as Aristotle's *Metaphysics* out of various smaller selections of Aristotle's works. The title 'metaphysics' – literally, 'after the *Physics*' – very likely indicated the place the topics discussed therein were intended to occupy in the philosophical curriculum. They were to be studied after the treatises dealing with nature (*ta phusika*). In this entry, we discuss the ideas that are developed in Aristotle's treatise (S. Marc Cohen, *Aristotle's Metaphysics*)

Aristotle conceived his metaphysics as the study of "being qua being", "wisdom", "Theology", "first cause", but did not give it the name "metaphysics" as we have seen above. Therefore, we can say that the subject matter of Aristotle's study in his metaphysics was being.

Commenting on Aristotle's metaphysics, Asouzo opines that Aristotle bifurcated being into substance and accident, and gave more credence to substance as that which can live alone without the support of "accidents":

Thus, for Aristotle, all beings are constituted of substance and accidents. (*Metaphysica* Book A, 2, 6, 8). On their part the substance or essence, belongs to real character of being, because: if these are not substance, there is no substance and no being at all; for the accidents of these it cannot be right to call beings (inaugural lecture, pg 15).

S. Marc Cohen seems to agree with Asouzo when he made the same point that Aristotle argues in a new way for the ontological priority of substance...[and] proposes a new point of departure in his effort to say what sort of a thing substance is. The new idea is that a substance is a "principle and a cause" of being (S. Marc Cohen, *Aristotle's Metaphysics*).

If we follow Asouzo's position so far in this work, we will see that Aristotle's conception of being has penetrated western education and the world at large and has caused a disjointed form of viewing reality which has affected the academia, leadership, and even our interpersonal relationship. Evidences abound in the unintended ethnocentric commitment which is stampeding scientific

objectivity, growth and development in the body of knowledge, and the way some political leaders in Nigeria discharge their responsibilities.

Aristotle's polarisation of being can be said to have, largely, had enormous influence on the way we view the world. Quoting from Sahakian, Asouzu traced the origin of this influence to the Arabian scholars who preserved the work of Aristotle, and tried to show how it even affected the church.

"Aristotle's works, which had been preserved by Arabian scholars, were acclaimed by the Church as criteria of truth which were to be accepted by all Christians just as they accepted the traditional dogma of the Church. Anyone who contradicted Aristotle was to be adjudged guilty of heresy" (Sahakian 103).

From the above quotation, one can only imagine and understand the enormity of such an influence if we cast take our minds back to the medieval period and try to remember what it meant to stand against the position of the church in view of what happened to Galileo Galilee. It is only when we do this that we will have a good grasp of the fact that till date, we are still victims of Aristotle's bifurcation of being. The logic is this: since it was an aberration to stand against the position of the church during this period and Aristotle's metaphysics was adopted by the church as the criateria for truth which was to be accepted by all christians as they accepted the traditional dogma of the church, then church must have adopted measures for this dogma to be taught in schools, diverse church Congregations, the media,social clubs and otherwise. This becomes more evident when we think of Aristotle's supremacy of substance over accidents, put it side by side in comparison with the way husbands claim unnecessary lordship over wife and children, leaders disrespect "the principle of rule of law", people do inhumane things to remain in power, even in the way many philosophies are done till date. If this is done, we will see how Aristotle's metaphysics has largely affected us.

This seems to be the cause of tension in the world today which has in no little way affect the realisation of authentic experience of being. The next section discusses how philosophy of essence, and the logic of kasom di adina(that I maybe alone) has affected growth and development, both in academic researches and interpersonal relationship.

Philosophy Of Essence, The Logic Of Kasom Di Adina And Their Adverse Effects

Whereas philosophy of essence designates any attempt to understand that relate to reality after the mindset of Aristotle's metaphysics..[which] is the attempt to relate to the world in a disjointed, disharmonious, exclusivist, polarising mode as to negate the mutual complementary interrelatedness between all existent realities(Inaugural Lecture, 16), the logic of "kasom di adina", that I maybe alone, is the cap that suits the head of that person who thinks he can maximise his existence all by himself, in contrast to the spirit of *ibuanyindanda*. In the words of Asouzu, *that person is to be pitied who thinks that a subject can afford to live alone, outside of the legitimacy provided by the mutual complimentary relationship between all missing links, and calls this existence (ibuanyindanda, pg 10).*

This is not a twin concept, since one of it is the mother of the other. Philosophy of essence is the mother of *kasom di Adina*. This is so because, the spirit of philosophy of essence is what produces *kasom di Adina's mindset*. When this sort of mindset is in place, there is a high tendency to view reality from a polarised lense, which is capable of blurring perception, pulling us into the chains of unintended ethnocentric commitment and amplify our self interest, no matter how good our intension is. I dare say that It is this sort of mindset that lays [undue] emphasis on or encourage the suremacy of one discipline over the other, sees one's self as being better than the other,makes a leader sees his/her self as being above the law, etc. For example, Here in Nigeria, the disproportionate attention that is accorded the natural sciences speaks volumes of the mindset with which we approach reality. This is all the more the case when our admission quota favours the natural sciences, which by implication are rated higher than other disciplines(inaugural lecture, 20).

To unburden or avoid the adverse effect of the philosophy of essence and the logic of *kasom di adina*, entails the acquisition of the *ibuanyindada's* spirit or mindset. *Ibuanyindanda* as a new ontology provides an horizon for viewing reality in a comprehensive complimentary way, which seeks to eradicate the difficulties pose by Aristotle's bifurcation of reality into substance and accidents, which has coloured our minds with the belief that substance and accident lies in

diverse regions and that substance does not need accidents to exist because it has the capacity to exist on its own, but accidents cannot exist on their own but rather rely on substance for their own existence. The new complimentary ontology, *ibuanyindanda*, seeks to eradicate this type of mindset and upholds that anything that exists is such that serves a missing link of reality or that which has the capacity to be in a mutual complementary relationship with all things that exist.

The Need For Authentic Experience Of Being

Most human actions are dictated by our primitive instinct of self-preservation...of all the things that determine our action, this primitive drive can be seen as the most fundamental. This passion for self-preservation is at the root of our desire to excel and to be different, even to the point of sounding absurd. This we can do either within a universal context or within a circumscribed location. When this drive takes the character of securing those private interests that we desire most, in total exclusion of other stakeholders, it can make us unduly competitive, jealous of the achievements of the others. Likewise, it can inject undue fear into us, lest we are overtaken by others (*Ibuanyindanda*, 24).

It is pertinent to note at this juncture that the drive for self-preservation is an immanent existential situation of man. This means that it is not a product of a particular cultural background, it is something universal. In the face of many competing interests searching for supremacy, man is often driven by this primitive instinct to want to protect his own interest first. Thus, there is a need for us to remind ourselves of this point because; forgetting it may lead to a tragic end, because it can prevent us from having an authentic experience of being.

What does it mean to have an authentic experience of being? Authentic existence... entails therefore the capacity to equilibrate the tension arising from the inner recesses of our being in a way that guarantees mutual coexistence of all units within the framework of the whole (*inaugural lecture*,29). In view of this, one can say that all matters of authentic philosophising [as well as authentic experience of being] starts with the mind; and a transcendent type of mindset for that matter. This is the type of mindset that reveals to its subject that in considering any given situation, one has to take into account all the factors and actors that

entered into it genesis, no matter how insignificant (ibuanyindanda,42). Thus, we can only enjoy an authentic experience of being when all the actors possess the type of mindset that is driven by the spirit of ibuanyindanda. It is these particular mindsets that will enable us manage and control our ambivalent nature and the primitive drive of self interest when it wants to show up in the negation of the interest and contributions of all the other factors and actors. Hence, we can be said to have an authentic experience of being when we are able to manage and control our idiosyncrasies in view of the ambivalent nature of man in a way that guarantees mutual complementary relationship.

Since, according to Asouzu, all matter of authentic philosophising as well as authentic experience of being start with the mind(ibaunyindanda, emphasis mine, 42), one cannot easily throw overboard, over night, the long legacies of a polarising antagonistic type of thinking in which most people that have imbibed western type of education, socialisation and indoctrination have been raised. It is therefore necessary for us to think about a kind of neotic propaedeutic that will enable us possess the kind of mind that will help us attend the level of authentic existence or authentic experience of being. Thus, there is a need for a neotic propaedeutic for an authentic experience of being because the world seems to be caught in the web of Aristotle's bifurcation of reality.

Neotic Propaedeutic: A Necessity For The Authentic Experience Of Being

Since Aristotle's bifurcation of being and its adverse effect has affected and polarised the way we view reality, pursue truth, relate with one another, etc, we have been prevented from enjoying the savour of an authentic experience of being. As we have noted in the previous chapter, Asouzu argues that we can only attain the joy of authentic experience of being, only when we manage the ambivalence of our nature in such a way that enables us recognise that we are all missing link of reality, which is spirit of ibuanyindanda's ontology. What this implies is the fact that there is a particular type of mindset that is needed to fulfil the necessary requirement for attaining the joy of authentic experience of being and this type of mindset is one that has ibuanyindanda's disposition.

Asouzu defines neotic propaedeutic in the following way:

By noetic propaedeutic, I mean a pre-education of the mind and human reason with a view to overcoming the broken unity in human consciousness caused by the challenges of the tension- laden human ambivalent existential situations and the mkpuchi anya (phenomenon of concealment). Through such a rigorous propaedeutic, actors are enabled to define their interests within the ambit of all missing links and to know reality in its true and authentic constitution. Thus, the major task of a noetic propaedeutic is to help the ego eliminate this broken unity and to help restore the subject to true self such that it can affirm sightfully that to be is to be in mutual complementary relationship with all missing links of reality ((ka sọ mụ adina). It is the moment actors succeed in affirming their being in this way, that we can say that they are living in the true sense of the word. It is the moment actors succeed in affirming their being within the framework of all missing links that it becomes evident to them also that to be is not to be alone (ka sọ mụ di). On the contrary, they become conscious of the fact that to be entails all the processes needed to overcome the demands of uche/obi akọlọ, uche aghughọ or uche ka sọ mụ di (negative wisdom or intelligence, hegemonic or exclusivist type of mindset), which is the seat of all negative acts and exclusivist tendencies. It is by reason of the same insight that they strive always to act from the promptings of a complementary comprehensive type of mindset (obi/uche ka sọ mụ adina) (inaugural lecture, 48 and 49).

What this implies is that the pedagogy of noetic propaedeutic and its necessary conditions for the actualisation of the joy of our being or the authentic experience of our being, is inherent in ibuanya indanda's ontology. Therefore, for one to really claim authentic existence, he or she must have the mind or spirit of ibuanya indanda's ontology and must operate within its framework, or must at least, fulfil the minimum requirement of working in a mutual relationship with other actors of existence and recognise them as missing links of reality.

Therefore, noetic propaedeutic is a precondition (Which is the acquisition of ibuanya indanda's mindset) for any meaningful discourse in philosophy, science, interpersonal relationship, approach to truth, leadership and administration, without which we stand the chance of having an exclusivist, clannish, disjointed, polarized view of reality which is rife with serious dangers, among which we have noted some in the chapter two of this work.

Conclusion

The mind only responds in the way in which it is tuned and conditioned by the ontology pervading the education, socialisation and indoctrination through which it is trained with. According to Asouzu, Aristotle's metaphysics is polarising and bifurcating. Hence, it breeds an hegemonic mindset with polarising perception of reality which is capable of and has created an unhealthy divide in humans relationship, leadership, politics, etc. Thus, there is a need for a mindset that perceives reality in a complementary mood that gives regard to anything that exist as a "missing link". This is Ibuanyindada's type of mindset. Without this type of mindset, authentic experience of being will be impossible.

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