

THE DIMENSION OF NECESSITY IN ASOUZU'S ONTOLOGY

By

Anongu Iorhen M. Moses

Department Of Philosophy

Faculty of Arts

University of Calabar, Calabar

Abstract

The work, The Dimension of Necessity in Asouzu's Ontology is carefully addressed from the philosophical point of view of Ibuanyidanda (Mutual Complementary and Comprehensive Reflection), and is a critical analysis of Asouzu's ontology (Complementarity). This ontology can be understood if and only if we have a clear picture of Asouzu's notion of being and nothingness. The work holds that any bifurcative and polarizing concept of being is problematic. After a critical study of Asouzu's ontology as based on the concept of Ibuanyidanda, undergirded by the principle that "whatever exists serves a missing link of reality" (Ibuanyidanda, 253) I discover that Asouzu's idea is antithetical to the ideas of most philosophers especially Sartre whose idea of being is bifurcating and polarizing in nature. A study of his work revealed that Sartre whose original intention was to overcome the bifurcating and polarizing notion of being that was predominant in Western Philosophy in turn fell into the same problem as he notes that being is of two kinds namely, being-in-itself and being-for-itself. He afterwards focused all his philosophizing on being-for-itself (human being), which he term nothingness. And through this nothingness, being-for-itself negates the existence of other beings. This paper therefore seeks to analyze Asouzu's idea of being and nothingness in the perspective of his mutual complementary and comprehensive reflection as the necessary dimension to understanding ibuanyidanda philosophy. By so doing, I shall dwells on his works in conjunction with the library method where relevant literatures or works are interpreted and synthesized for our purpose. Finally, I shall advanced in conclusion that from the framework of Asouzu's Ibuanyidanda philosophy there is no need for bifurcation and polarization of being and that all aspects and kinds of being cannot exist outside a mutual complementary relationship since they are serving as missing links to each other. The benefit of such a conception of being is that it ensures harmony, mutual relations and integration of all aspects of being, and this in turn could improve interpersonal relations in our society.

Introduction

Professor Asouzu has done well not only in philosophy but also in other disciplines within the globe. His philosophy of *ibuanyidanda* or complementary reflection is applicable in all spheres of human endeavour to integrate, coexist, unify and create a mutual harmonious whole. This is because his 'system of thought goes beyond the world immanent concomitant pre-deterministic immediacy and existential fragments to inculcate knowledge of oneself (ego) in relation to others knowing that whatever exists serves a missing link of reality. One can say that Asouzu's approach to philosophy is one of self-realization and self-rediscovery mediated in a complementary horizon (*ibuanyidanda*) taking into cognizance all existing realities as the mind seeks to attain full liberation. The whole universe is presently immersed in very serious crisis and I think that a cue can be taken from Asouzu's philosophy towards addressing some of our most daunting problems- tribalistic and ethnocentric tendencies among individuals and nations, individualism, corruption, etc. Thus, the habit of some personalities in embezzling public funds meant for the development and well being of individuals and nations has taken over the centre of power most especially, in our contemporary period. Hence, recourse to Asouzu's mutual complementarity principle as a necessity precondition of our existence becomes very important. This is the core intention of the paper i.e., to learn from Asouzu's philosophy of thought that "to be is not to be alone" (*ka so mu adina*) but to be in a complementary relationship with one another. This entails that authentic living includes taking others into cognizance knowing that what exists serves a missing link of reality. Besides, whatever exists has head and tail-end. (*ihe di nwere isi na odu*).

Explication of Concept

a. Ontology

'Ontology' or rather 'Ontologia' appears to have been coined in 1613 by two philosophers writing independently of each other: Jacob Lordhad in his *Theatrum Philosophicum* and Rudolf Gockel in his *Lexican Philosophicum*. The first occurrence in English seems to be in Bailey's *Dictionary* of 1721, where Ontology is defined as 'an account of being in abstract'.

Ontology is derived from two Greek words namely "onto" - meaning being and "logos" - meaning study. Ontology is simply the study of being. It is "the study

of the meaning, nature, principles of whatever is and in as much as it is or exists” (Wallace 85). Briefly put, it is the science of being. Being signifies a concept that has the widest extension and the least comprehension. The word being has two senses:

The study of what *is*, or what exists; the study of entities or things; and

The study of what it is to be or to exist; what all the things that are have in common (Tony Lawson, 2004).

Certainly this twofold conception is adopted here. Clearly, so conceived, ontology amounts to the study of anything and everything; for everything is a part of being (86). Being as a subject-matter of ontology is very complex and has been discussed by most philosophers of various eras. This is because it poses a lot of problems to philosophers. These philosophers tend to probe into being, its nature and manifestations. In so doing, they encounter more and more problems. There are those who see being as an abstract entity. There are also those who are of the view that being is solely concrete. There are furthermore, those who see being as consisting of both abstract and concrete nature. Also among philosophers, there exists the tendency to bifurcate being and elevate an aspect of being over and against the other. The problem of being further extends to the notion of being and nothingness. The underlying question begging for answer and which appears to pose a perennial problem is the question: what really is the nature of being and how is it related to nothingness?

To answer the question rose above, Asouzu, attempts to penetrate and grasp being, and with its ultimate reality through mediation or via the instrumentality of “mutual complementary relationship” (*Inaugural Lecture* 42). Instead of polarizing being, complementarity seeks to harmonize, complement and unify the same. In this mutual relationship “being is that on the account of which anything that exists serves as missing link of reality” (Asouzu, *Inaugural Lecture* 41). It is on this “principle of integration” of being in *ibuanyidanda* that Sartre’s idea of being and nothingness becomes irrelevant. Hence, no being can exist in isolation of other beings and it is only when one live in a mutual complementary relationship that one is said to be in existence.

Asouzu perceived Ontology as the doctrine or teaching about being, or the study of being (*Ibuanyidanda: New Complementary Ontology*, 251-252). The above definitions of ontology seem to give a clear direction of my paper. Hence, the idea of mutual complementarity and comprehensive reflection as a dimension of necessity in Asouzu’s ontology cannot be achieved in absence of being. The

notion of 'Being' is unarguably, the most important theme in metaphysics. Hence, metaphysics simply defined is the "philosophy of being" (Daugherty 5) or "the science of being in common" (Daugherty 10). This 'Being' that metaphysics studies, is the being of being distinct from the being of particular things. Daugherty quotes Aristotle as holding that metaphysics is "a science which investigates being as being and the attributes which belong to this in virtue of its own nature...it is of being as that we also must grasp the first causes" (11). Hence, for Aristotle, metaphysics is the science of being as being. This pursuit of metaphysics is most expressed in one of its major branch called ontology discussed above.

An Analysis of Being and Nothingness in Ibuanyidanda Philosophy

This section focuses on the notion of being and nothingness in *Ibuanyidanda* (complementary) philosophy.

a. The Notion of Being

Ibuanyidanda is an approach to ontology which wishes to bridge the artificial chasm, and overcome all forms of bifurcating barriers, which the mind imposes on the relationship between substance and its accident (Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda* 253). It also "explores a method and principles to coalesce the real and the ideal, the essential and the accidental into system of mutual complementing units". This is to say *Ibuanyidanda* ontology attempts to penetrate and grasp being, and with it ultimate reality through mediation or via the instrumentality of mutual relations. In line with this complementary system of thought Asouzu defines being as "that on account of which anything that exists serves a missing link of reality" (451). Within this context, to be is to be in mutual relationship with other existents. To be is not to be alone (*ka so mu adina*). Thus, being is located within the context of mutual complementarity of all possible relations in the sense of an existent reality having head and tail- end (*ihe di, nwere isi na odu*)- the thing that exists has head and tail end. To be is to have head and tail- end (*ihe di, nwere isi na odu*). To be in *Ibuanyidanda* ontology is to serve a missing link of reality. To say that something has being according to Asouzu, "entails all the processes that enter into grasping the thing in question meaningfully within a complementary framework" (253). Hence, "what we understand as substance in its relation to accident can be grasped not in the mode of the relationship of an abstract isolated concept to a concrete one" (*Ibuanyidanda* 254). In this ontology, both accident and substance are viewed as inseparable dimensions of being, where substance is used to describe the thing that is most important (*ihe kachasi mkpa*),

and accident, the thing that is important (*ihe di mkpa*). Similarly, to be in *Ibuanyidanda* is to be in control (*ima onwe onye*). Invitalizing the value of *ima onwe onye* (being in control), Asouzu says “in all life situations, all attempts at upholding an authentic existence can be seen as a continuous process of complementary reawakening, complementary revitalisation, conscientisation or re-habitualisation” (330).

b. The Idea of Nothingness

We live in a world of contraries, of opposites and so forth. When we talk of being (*ihe di*), our critical minds quickly reflect on what is not (*ihe na adighi*). Hence, the idea of being connotes the opposite idea of non-being or nothingness. Once we affirm that there is something (*onwere ihe di*), we on the other hand are confronted with the possibility of non-existence (*ihe na adighi*). From the *Ibuanyidanda* ontology so far understood, “any type of ontology begins with identifying contraries as missing links that are in mutual complementary, comprehensive, future-oriented relationship to each other” (*Ibuanyidanda* 262). According to Asouzu, we go beyond saying that “something is” (*odi*) to “underline the fact that it has a head” (*onwere isi*). When this is done, we grasp being as something that has meaning (*onwere isi*) thus state unequivocally that “it is”. The above approach, for Asouzu, is applicable when we wish to emphasize that it (existence) is meaningless and as such has no being or existence. We do this by positing that it has no head and tail-end (*onwegi isi, onwegi odu*). That is, we affirm existence by upholding that it has head and tail-end (*onwere isi na odu*). Asouzu argues thus: *Ihe di, nwere isi na odu* (thing that exists has head and tail). Hence, to be is to have head and tail-end (*ihe di, nwere isi na odu*) as to have full meaning. To exist is virtually the capacity to have head and tail-end (*ihe di, nwere isi na odu*). (*Ibuanyidanda* 253) By implication, where it has no head and tail-end (*onwegi isi na odu*), it has no meaning and therefore does not exist-it is nothing. Hence, for Asouzu, something exists if it has meaning in so far as it serves a missing link. Thus Asouzu notes “within this context, being is understood as that because of which anything that exists serve a missing link of reality” (*Ibuanyidanda* 251). Therefore it follows, if existence is negated through meaninglessness (*onwegi isi*) then there is non-existence or nothingness in so far as no missing link is served. Another way to understand nothingness from *Ibuanyidanda* perspective is to look at existence from its relevance to “other perceiving subjects” (*Ibuanyidanda* 254). First, we designate the thing that is most important (*ihe kachasi mkpa*), not in the abstract, abstruse, exclusivist sense but one existent reality whose being can be grasp in relation to all missing links in reality. *Ihe di*

kachasi mkpa (substance) do not stand in “isolation” otherwise it runs the risk of not being known even if it does exist. That is, it cannot be perceived by other subjects. Complementarity demands that a being according to Asouzu “must be perceived by any of the units with which it constitutes a complementary whole relationship” (ibid, 254), otherwise this brings it to the status of non-being (*ka so mu di*). On the surface, this approach is like the Berkeleyan claim of “*esse est percipi*”-“to be is to be perceived” (Omogegbe, *Epistemology* 88) because non existence or nothingness arises when something is not in any perceptible mode as to be in mutual relationship with other beings. Nothingness can likewise be inferred from the idea of being articulated within the context of “relations” (Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda* 259) as we apply the methodological approach. For Asouzu, being loses its significance as that which is. For this new ontology, to be as captured in the expression of that has head and tail-end (*ihe nwere isi na odu*), is the awareness that what is, as this becomes manifest in diverse existential modes of being, can be accessed only within the context of the totality as missing links that serve each other mutually. Thus, Asouzu opines “to be is to be in mutual complementary relation (*ka so mu adina*) and its negation is to be alone (*ka so mu di*) and nothing” (*Inaugural Lecture* 42). Being is as such dynamic and in mutual service to each other. Outside this essential rational mode, it has no head and tail-end (*onwegi isi na odu*) because it does not serve a missing link. It follows that such a being does not exist. Nothingness can more so connote not being in control. According to Asouzu: Wherever and whenever the ego has lost the capacity to be self-conscious and assert itself positively in this manner, it has also lost grips of being; it can even be said to have lost sense of its own existence, even if the subject imagines that the contrary could be the case. This loss ensues from the fact that negating any missing link in the process of its own self-affirmation entails negating what has head and tail-end (*ihe inwe isi na odu*). In this case, the ego is negating meaning, and in negating meaning, it is directly also negating being, the foundation of its own existence. (*Ibuanyidanda*, 332). Furthermore, nothingness can be inferred from Asouzu’s attempt in his complementary reflection to rehabilitate the idea of being in a way to salvage it from Aristotle’s bifurcation. According to Asouzu, “the complementary ontology wishes to bridge the artificial chasms, and overcome all forms of barrier which the mind imposes on the relationship between substance and accident” (*Ibuanyidanda* 252). From the above quotation, it is clear that substance and accidents are viewed as inseparable constituents of being, where substance is used to designate the thing that is most important (*ihe kachasi mkpa*), and accident, the things that are important (*ihe di mkpa*). Both substance and accidents

do not exist independent of each other, they exist side by side. Hence for them to exist independently implies non-being or nothingness.

The Dimension of Necessity in Asouzu's Ontology

Looking from the analytic point of view of Ibuanyidanda philosophy and its exposition of being and nothingness, one can easily see beyond doubt the dimension it takes to arriving at the inherent problems associated with being and how these problems could easily be better handled. Asouzu in his efforts to address some avoidable problems created by being itself attempts to penetrate and grasp being, and with it ultimate reality through mediation and the instrumentality of mutual relations. He conceives being in the instance of other beings *and emphasized mutual complementary reflection among beings*. Within this context, to be according to Asouzu is to be in mutual relationship with other existents. His ontology is located within the context of mutual complementarity of all possible relations in the sense of an existent reality. Because of this type of necessary service in complementarity, and the inherent dimension of missing link, this mode of relationship seeks to supersede the difficulty inherent in any type of world immanent reductionism of a mechanistic exclusivist type (ibuanyidanda, 284). Where we conceptualize this mode of mutual complementary relationship in the fixed mode of an agent or series of agents that brings about an effect and vice versa, there are always dangers of ideological oversimplifications. This is still the case where such agents are dependent on themselves mutually, but this mode of mutual relationship is not understood in the sense of serving a missing link. Due to the difficulties all mechanistic causal modes of understanding present, some are even of the opinion that the idea of causality has to be dropped altogether (285).

It is also important to note that according to Asouzu, complementary mode of determination is directed against all modes of understanding causality, which negate the moment of a necessary mutual service in complementarity. This means that in complementary ontology, we seek to strive beyond the idea of mere reciprocity, lawfulness, functional connection, chance, spontaneity, self-determination, confirmation of hypotheses of causal connection etc., as to encompass all possible relations that serve each other interminable and such that might be adjudged necessary for a thing to assume a new condition or shape. For complementary ontology, any model that restricts mutual relationship only to those things needed to change the state of an affair beyond the mutual complementary relationship existing between them is a typical instance of bifurcating exclusivist understanding of the idea of being in its dynamic

essentiality. These are those models of understanding relationship, which focus mostly on an agent which impacts and an effect, which is the recipient of such an impact (286).

For complementary ontology, the effect is a necessary condition to know its agent, and where there is no effect, we can also not think of an agent that causes it. This is a clear indication that the dimension of necessity in Asouzu's ontology is geared towards the principles of cause and effect. An agent risk remains inconceivable where it denies the effect and the inescapable role such effects has to produce. Where we negate the role, which effects play in being produced, then there is no need talking of cause and effect, since both would mean the same thing. However, when we talk of cause and effect, we do not mean the same thing. In most cases we even mean a very complex mode of relationship beyond known causes. It is precisely due to the illusion arising from a stringent commitment to an ontology of differences that many are of the opinion that the idea of causality, as it is normally used in classical metaphysics, has to be dropped altogether. According to Asouzu, they may be right in this sense provided this is not a ploy to reintroduce intolerance and an ontology of exclusiveness through another guise. Hence, it would be a big mistake to make recourse to alternative paradigms which seek to explain the character of relationship between units but which give the impression that such cannot be grasped within the framework of mutual complementary relationship (ibid, 288).

One can say that most controversies and debates surrounding the idea of causality within the history of philosophy, and inspired by the spirit of Aristotle, find it difficult to adjust a complementary mode of understanding missing links, most especially as human subjects. This is what becomes evident in most detailed investigation of this matter. Typical examples are those undertaken by Mario Bunge (*The rival of causality; The Place of the Causal Principle in the Modern Science*), Edward H. Madden (*The Meaning of 'Cause and Law'*) and Alexander Rosenberg (*Causation and teleology in contemporary philosophy of science*). What is striking in these essays is that most attempts to grapple with the difficulties presented by the idea of causality end up not being committed fully to the idea of an intrinsic mutual complementary relationship between what can be regarded as an agent and its effect. However, Rosenberg's essay stands distinct in this aspect because it show how most treaties dealing with idea of causality have great difficulty submitting to the notion that there is a mutual complementary relationship between cause and effect.

As observed earlier, we can say epistemologically that a cause without a necessary inherent complementary linkage to its effect remains a matter of illusion within the domain of human self-conscious act. Consequently, Hume's problem of induction, as with most theories that seek to negate the moment of mutual complementary relationship between a cause and its effect remain more ideological than purely epistemological matter. If a person were to deny such a necessary complementary linkage between cause and effect, this person would definitely not be in a position to consummate his reflection as an act peculiar to human being that shares the world with others. This is because no reflection is possible without a form of intrinsic linkage of the subject to a network of relations that complement themselves manually (Ibuanyidanda, 293).

More so, any understanding of cause must be in a position to help us explain events, not only in an efficient causal mode, but more so, in a complementary mutual related fashion. This is that understanding of causality that is adaptable, not only in the sciences, but more so, in the understanding of reality generally, as missing links in mutual complementary relationship to each other. One can then say that all forms of causes have an inherent dimension that is necessarily complementary. This is a fact that cannot be denied should cause and effect have any meaning at all. This mode of understanding the relationship between cause and effect follows the way human consciousness relates to reality in general beyond arbitrariness and mere habits. As such, the dimension of necessity in understanding Asouzu's ontology becomes an interesting exercise.

If the above view is correct and hold water, then we can understand why Asouzu assigned a very preponderant place to the fact of mutual complementary dependency of all finite modes of existence, within the frame work of the new complementary ontology as is captured by the insight that anything that exists serves a missing link of reality, which is the most fundamental statement that can be made about things. Over and above all, Asouzu's ontology which we intend to study should be an ontology that has an intrinsic dimension of its calculus the liberation of the human mind from the constraints arising from its ambivalence situations.

Conclusion

It is pertinent to state here that for Asouzu, every discrete existent being is incomplete and insufficient in itself and for itself but is in need of complementation of others in the same whole. It is therefore apparent in this context that no individual can exist alone just as no isolated being can. This view

of Azouzu is better captured in the words of Ozumba which reads thus “it seems that the individual thing – (ka so mu di) to be alone, does not constitute being but only individual in complementary relationship with other individual can constitute being (ka so mu adina). This brings one to the understanding that no one or individual can be considered to be absolute. This is truly what is expressed in Asouzu’s truth and authenticity criterion which states that “never elevate any world immanent missing link to an absolute instance” (“*Ibuanyidanda*” and the *Philosophy of Essence* 105). In this way, one can say that just as being-for-itself should not be elevated to an absolute instance since it is serving a missing link to being-in-itself and vice versa, no individual or group should be elevated as such for there are all serving missing links and are in mutual service to one another. Likewise, all human beings exist in mutual dependence and interdependence. For outside of this nothing exists.

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