

SCIENTIFIC STATEMENTS AND THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN AMBIVALENCE SITUATION

By

Agbor, Innocent; Okey, Joel Ndifon; Usha, Charles Iwony; Bassey, Raphael
Ini; Isu, Emmanuel O.; Umoren, Raphael E.; Buluku Onoriode J.; Okon,
Effiong Etim

Department Of Philosophy
Faculty of Arts
University of Calabar, Calabar

Abstract

This work has examined scientific statements and the problem of human ambivalence situation. It would discover that scientific statements or models of explanation can be used adequately to explain human actions and interaction in the society. And though man is said to be an animal, his rational ability makes him unique from other lower animals.

Keywords: Scientific Statements, Human Ambivalence Situation.

Introduction

Our aim in this essay is to examine scientific statements and the problem of human ambivalence situation. We shall see if scientific statements or models of explanation can be used adequately to explain human actions and interaction in the society. Though man is said to be an animal, his rational ability makes him unique from other lower animals.

Also, man has the natural instinct of self preservation, which is the basis for his actions and interest. According to Akpan, "...human interests have double capacity which more often than not, are conflicting, portraying negativity and positivity at the same time. Professor Asouzu painstakingly and vividly captures this phenomenon as the ambivalence of human situation..." (American Journal of Social and Management Sciences, 2).

Therefore, the thrust of this essay is that any model of explanation concerning man, his actions and interactions in the society that fails to accommodate the phenomenon of human ambivalence situation, is ipso facto not effective.

Conceptual Analysis

In order to attain a better understanding of this essay and to avoid ambiguity, we shall define the key words employed herein.

- a. **Scientific Statements:** These are statements of facts that can be verified; these are statements involving or connected with science.
- b. **Problem:** According to the Oxford Advanced learner's Dictionary, Problem means a thing that is difficult to deal with or to understand.
- c. **Human:** This entails what is connected with people (human beings) rather than animals (lower), machines or gods.
- d. **Ambivalence Situation:** This simply means a situation comprising of both positive and negative aspects. A double-sided situation.

Human Ambivalence Situation

It is indeed not out of place for one to reflect on the problem of human ambivalence situation, because according to Mondin, "indifference can arise towards all others (dogs, cats, horses, dinosaurs, etc), but not towards ourselves. We must necessarily occupy and preoccupy ourselves with the sense of our life and the value of our existence" (Philosophical Anthropology, 1).

Therefore, in studying man, there is one obvious thing that man has in common with other creatures, namely the natural (inherent) instinct of self preservation. Thus, Asouzu opines that "under the influence of this primitive instinct, human being always seek to act after what I call the super maxim, which states; 'the nearer the better and the safer' (Ibuanyidanda: New Complementary Ontology, 19).

Furthermore, even if the human person is fundamentally rational, the same human person is subject to challenges of our fundamental instinct of self preservation. Thus, caught between being human and being subject to our most primitive instinct, a tension is created within human consciousness. This is the foundation of the ambivalent tension that characterizes our consciousness (Asouzu, 11). The implication of this is that self preservation is a strong instinct in man. In fact all of man's effort strictly speaking, is geared towards self preservation (survival) and it is within this context that man can and strive to make significant meaning out of his spatio temporal existence.

The above is the basis for human actions, either as an individual or as a group. Hence, According to Akpan, "Self preservation and its concomitant interest are not tendencies that are bad in themselves. The problem, however is exposed when we critically examine the intrigues that characterize such interest and the

intricate aims human beings associate with such pursuits” (American Journal of social and Management Sciences, 2).

Nonetheless, according to Asouzu, human interest is ambivalent because it has a double capacity and as such can represent something negative and positive at the same time (effective leadership..., 15). This imply that we can pursue a certain course hoping and believing that its outcome will certainly be beneficial, without knowing that we would also get what is negative as against or alongside what we pursue. Therefore, this tendency is the root cause of social disorder, crisis, distrust and lack of our development as humans, state, nation and continent respectively (Akpan, 2).

Again, Asouzu correctly sees the phenomenon of ambivalence of human interest as something that is paradoxical. He wonders how we could explain a situation where one seeks to conserve his interest but at the same time undertake actions that would virtually lead to his destruction and in the process end up by losing whatever interest he was trying to conserve (effective leadership, 15-16).

Some examples to support the above includes that of a suicide bomber who in the process of detonating a bomb, end up losing his life and that of innocent people who are not his target. Also, this explains the action of a goal miner who still dares to enter a goal mine that is dangerous and as a result prohibited. Instances of pipeline vandalization in the quest to scoop fuel illegally, when the vandals know very well that they may end up being burnt to death, also fall within the purview of human ambivalent situation. Therefore, the impacts of these constraining phenomena and mechanisms can throw more light on why people are more likely to indulge in the same ills and vices they ordinarily condemn and reject (Asouzu. *Ibuanyidanda: complementary reflection and some Basic...*, 13).

Furthermore, as regards why people in wanting to preserve themselves end up acting in ways that tend to destroy or harm them, Asouzu opines that one of the major reasons for this is because besides being ambivalent and tension laden, all human existential situations are characterized by inherent moment of concealment (*Ibuanyidanda: Complementary reflection and some basic...*, 11). That is to say it is the phenomenon of concealment (*Ihe mkpuchi anya*) that forces our drives towards certain interest which are rather deceptive in nature.

However, the question now is, how then do we get out or get liberated from the phenomenon of human ambivalence? Professor Asouzu makes it clear that we can free ourselves from this tyranny only if we make concerted conscious efforts

to be aware of their devastating effect (Akpan, 3). According to Asouzu, if we were fully aware of the dangers associated with the ambivalence of our interests, we would certainly not sign our own death warrant; we would vehemently resist those things that would complicate matters later and put us into trouble (effective leadership, 6).

Asouzu further stated that “it is the lack of adequate awareness concerning the phenomenon of ambivalence of human interest that makes us choose wrongly, when it matters most. If we were aware of this ambivalence, we would always make spirited efforts to avoid those things that would actually never desire even if they touch on our most cherished personal interests. (Effective leadership..., 7).

The fact that being very critical may likely reveal that human beings are conscious of the dangers that lie in-wait as consequences of certain actions, like that of the suicide bombers, the goal miners and the pipe line vandals notwithstanding, Asouzu has propounded two basic principles of complementarity on how to manage this natural phenomenon that beset human life. There include;

1. The principle of harmonious complementation
 2. The principle of progressive transformation.
- ✓ **The Principle of Harmonious Complementation**

The principle states that “anything that exists serves a missing link of reality” (Ibuanyidanda: New Complementary Ontology, II). The implication of this is that the whole is a composite of the various part, if the parts are viewed in isolation there would be meaningless and also missing in relation to the others, for to be is to be with others (ka so mu adina) and not to be alone (ka so mu di). Therefore for any reality to be meaningful, its components have to be viewed complementarily.

Hence, when viewed in the light of human social action, this principle would mean that both the positive as well as the negative parts of human existence should be harmoniously and mutually related in other to serve each other in a complementary way.

- ✓ **The Principle of Progressive Transformation**

The demand of this second principle is none other than to allow the limitation of being to be the cause of joy. That is, we should accept our limitations and finality as humans, while making efforts to see these as conditions through which we can

achieve higher level of legitimization. For only so can our struggle and interest in the society have authentic meaning and significance.

Scientific Statements And The Problem Of Human Ambivalence Situation

Since we have had a look at the meaning of human ambivalence situation, we shall now beam our philosophical search-light on scientific statements and the problem of human ambivalence situation. Literally and according to various dictionary definitions, the term science means knowledge arranged in an organized or orderly manner, especially knowledge derived from experience, observation and experimentation (Uduigwomen, 20).

According to Uduigwomen, "thus conceived, science does have historical roots... however, it first emerged in its modern form in western Europe in the 17th century... modern science is thus distinctively European in origin (Philosophy and the Rise of Modern Science, 17-18).

Thus, the scientific method, which provides the rules for gathering evidence and evaluating hypotheses on the basis of such evidence and the fixed and universal principles of logic combined to become the paradigm method for any form of knowledge (including the social sciences) wishing to be regarded as rational/scientific. This was what propelled the positivists like August Comte and the falsificationists like Karl Popper to want to demarcate science from non science i.e. science from pseudo science.

Therefore this logo-centric scientific paradigm has had a firm grip on many models of explanation towards explaining natural phenomena and infact, human social behavior. But to what extent have these science based models of explanation succeeded in explaining, especially human actions rationally? (Akpan, 5). Akpan further asserts that man with his complex nature, characterized by his intentions, beliefs, values, aspirations, and most important his interest and the natural instinct of self-preservation can render the logo-centric scientific method, especially as peddled by the positivists, questionable (American Journal..., 5).

Michael Lesnoff was cited by Akpan to have argued strongly that the model of natural science is inapplicable in the social science because the existence of social facts always implies the existence of mental state- intentions, purposes, beliefs, expectations and awareness of rules which are not observable by empirical methods (188) (American Journal..., 5-6).

As a result, any study of man has to take into consideration the human existential situation which of course is influenced by the ambivalent nature of his interest.

Furthermore, the positivist model of scientific explanation for instance, applies the exclusivist disjunctive kind of reasoning. Hence, there is a problem with that kind of reasoning because reality is indeed complex and not merely phenomenal. Also, the realist position on explanation is that an authentic causal explanation of event could be achieved if we strive to uncover and understand the underlying structure, the operative mechanisms and their interrelationship that gives rise to phenomena. However, the problem of this model of explanation is that it appears to divorce the real from the appearances as if they have no mutual relationship.

Nonetheless, both models, on the whole, do not seem to bother about taking the different strands and components of reality into consideration in a complementary manner. This problem is what Asouzu's complimentary approach seeks to overcome (Akpan, 6). The implication of such models of explanation as aforementioned is that they tend to detach the issue of what factors are responsible for the actions of the social agent, when applied to human social action.

Therefore, each component of reality is meaningful only when understood in relation to the other components. Hence, all models that are restrictive in their explanation of reality are non-complementary, and all non-complementary models are models that are incapable of explaining the phenomenon of ambivalence that beset human existence.

Evaluation And Conclusion

Having looked at human ambivalence situation and scientific statements, it would not be out of place to say that Webb was right when he opined or asserted that "prediction in the social sciences, while there may be some shared features, is not like prediction in the natural sciences for three reasons. First behavior is not invariable as is frequently the case with matter in natural science. Second consciousness is a factor in human behavior whereas it is not a factor in the behavior of matter.... Third, while prediction is often used in natural science as a way of validating an experiment..., the nature of prediction in the social sciences frequently precludes its use as a means of validation. (An Introduction to Problems in the Philosophy of Social Science, 140-141).

Finally, though to risk repetition, human interest is ambivalent because it has a double capacity and as such can represent something negative and positive at the same time (Asouzu, *Effective leadership*, 150). And since scientific statements are statements that are fact oriented, i.e. mostly based on observation and can be verifiable (like the positivists and realists models of explanation), they are meaningful and in most cases correct. But when it has to do with human social behavior, scientific statements are seen to be lopsided. Hence, any model of explanation wishing to explain the actions of man must go beyond the outward or physical manifestations to the fundamental cause – the human primordial interest, self preservation and must take into cognizance human ambivalent situation.

References

- Akpan, O. Chris, “Ambivalence of Human Existential Situation as an Index of Rational Explanation”. In *American Journal of Social and Management Sciences*. Vol. 2, No. 1. Pg 1-10, 2011.
- Asouzu I. Innocent. *Effective leadership and the ambivalence of human interest*. Calabar: University of Calabar Press, 2004. Print.
- Asouzu I. Innocent. *Ibuanindanda Complementary Reflection and Some Basic Philosophical Problems in Africa Today*. Calabar: A. E. Moroko Coy. Print.
- Asouzu I. Innocent. *Ibuanidanda: New Complementary Ontology*. Calabar: A.E Moroko Coy. Print.
- Webb Keith. *An introduction to Problems in the philosophy of Social Sciences*. New York: Print.
- Mordin Battista. *Philosophical Anthropology*. Bangalose: Theological Publications, 2011. Print.
- Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, 7th Edition*. Print.
- Uduigwomen A. F. *A Textbook of History and Philosophy of Science*. Aba: AAU Vitalis Book Company, 2007. Print.
- Uduigwomen A. F. *Philosophy and the Rise of Modern Science*. UYO: El-Johns Publishers, 2011. Print.