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Essays on Complementary Reflection

**By
Beresford-Cole Joy**

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Complementary reflection is a school of thought that seeks to unite all relative entities in a harmonious, comprehensive perspective. It seeks to unite relative entities in a manner that harmonises diversity in a complementary whole. Complementarity is a concept that is fast gaining ground within and outside the academic circle. Complementarity is a philosophical school that seeks to relate world immanent realities in a comprehensive, total and unifying manner in the joy of being and in a complementary unity of consciousness.

Complementary reflection therefore is a philosophical mechanism that would be used to make this philosophical project progress. In a complementary perspective, complementary reflection talks about concepts like wholeness, totality, universality and all these find expression in the joy of being which unites all entities in a complementary consciousness. This school of thought is a negation of exclusiveness which sees being in its singularity. Although complementary reflection is whole and future oriented it finds legitimization in the unity of diversity. Complementary reflection emphasises the phenomenon of transcendent complementary unity of consciousness. The concept "complementary reflection" itself is transcendent. This unity in diversity is what gives meaning to human existence. In a complementary mind-set, as is typical of the traditional African being is geared towards a harmonious whole, just as all human beings are. This positive mind-set is what is required for progress and peaceful coexistence that would make the world progress.

In assessing complementary reflection as a philosophy of integration and social progress, one can see that this philosophy seeks to unite the world

in a total, comprehensive and universal manner, likewise it seeks to unite entities or relations with one another and all in view of the common good. Where this is successful, there will be a considerable amount of social progress within human communities. In a society where complementarity is the order of the day and individuals live together in a harmonious existence, life would have more meaning in the joy of being as an expression of a form of transcendent unity of consciousness.

Using Nigeria as a case study, Nigeria which happens to be a perfect example of a geographical location that is full of ethnic, cultural and religious diversities will progress and have a better social integration when the philosophy of complementary reflection is well implemented. When this is done, and people accept to see each other in the light of universality and wholeness of values and within the framework of joy of being. Here we see our diversities not as exclusive categories but as complements to each other and in a way that unites us in a complementary whole. For example when all the tribes in Nigeria stop seeing each other either as Ibo, Yoruba, Fulani, Tiv, Itsekiri, but see each other first and foremost as Nigerians there will be a form of integration that will wipe away the fallacy of “the nearer the better and the safer”. Prof. Asouzu elucidates carefully what is meant by this fallacy and other important fallacies in his writing on complementary reflection. When complementary reflection is well implemented, it will bring about social progress and would make human existence more meaningful in a joyous complementary unity of consciousness.

Traditional African Complementary Ontology

In discussing the traditional African complementary ontology, one sees the traditional African as one that finds meaning in his existence in the values he attaches to the place of man in history within the ambit of space and time. The traditional African philosopher of the complementary direction makes no mistake in his views of the relationship between the individual and his world for this is what gives the individual meaning to his existence. For this philosopher, there cannot be an over estimation of the role diversities play in human existence. That is why this philosopher of the complementary direction, gives high regard to super sensible realities as well as to empirical realities as aspects of the totality of reality that complement themselves. For this anonymous philosopher there is a relationship between the spiritual and the material world, but he recognises the form of hierarchy obtainable within the realm of beings. The Ibo traditional philosopher of the complementary direction, for example, recognizes Chukwu to be at the apex of this hierarchy. The spiritual is therefore what gives the indi-

vidual his essence within a complementary framework.

The harmony that these traditional African philosophers of the complementary school recognize in nature is better expressed in the idea of service. Here service connotes a relational co-existence that is better expressed within the context of the Igbo aphorism *jide ka iji* as an ethical category of action. Here this ontology has a close affinity with religion such that services have a universal whole character with a religious connotation.. Thus the idea of service is inherent in the way the traditional African philosopher of the complementary school conceptualizes reality and in whatever he does to promote a complementary harmonious relationship that exists between all entities. These entities exist in correlation to the other and this is what gives man meaning in life. It is because of this intimate mutual relationship of the individual to all entities in service that the misunderstanding arises that the traditional Igbo, for example, as well as other African tribes and nations are involved in the worship of inanimate objects. But according to Basden, the Igbo, has an understanding of the hierarchy of being where Chukwu is at the head of this hierarchy. All entities within this hierarchy have roles that they play in mutual service to each other. It is in recognition of their services that they are represented with objects such as wood, trees etc.

The idea of the relational role is the essence of complementary ontology which gives it an ultimate ontological status in the transcendent unity of consciousness.